

The Fulcanelli Phenomenon

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KENNETH RAYNER JOHNSON

The
Fulcanelli
Phenomenon

*The story of a Twentieth-Century
Alchemist in the light of a new exam-
ination of the Hermetic Tradition*



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INTRODUCTION

IT WAS A riddle I could not resist.

On the one hand, alchemy - the search for the fabled Philosopher's Stone; the mysterious substance which supposedly permits transmutation of base metals into gold and production of the Elixir of Life. A subject which has fascinated - and bewildered - me for years.

On the other, a twentieth-century alchemist; a real, living person whom many claimed to have known and seen. A man who, apparently having discovered the Great Secret, disappeared from view. Not only that, a man who, if we are to believe those most closely associated with him, is still alive - and now more than 130 years old!

A man known as Fulcanelli.

An Adept whose real identity was known only to a few intimate disciples.

A genuine Philosopher of Fire who, having built a small, elite school of acolytes around him and bequeathed to one of them his two major written works, chose to vanish mysteriously in the true tradition of an Occult Master.

A Master who gave his closest associate a fragment of the Powder of Projection that enabled him to make gold.

* * *

Fulcanelli, says his sole, surviving pupil, M. Eugene Canseliet (now himself aged eighty), was already an old man when they last worked together - 'but he carried his eighty years lightly.' Thirty years later, they met again briefly - and the Master 'appeared to be a man of fifty ... no older than myself,' M. Canseliet says.

Fulcanelli, said the French researcher and writer, the late

Jacques Bergier, came to see him at a Paris physics laboratory in 1937 - and warned of the inherent dangers now that mankind was on the verge of unleashing nuclear energy onto an unsuspecting world. 'The alchemists have known the secret for a very long time,' Bergier's mysterious visitor told him.

At the end of the Second World War, the American Office for Strategic Services - the forerunner of the CIA - made a search for Fulcanelli, as they did for anyone, particularly German scientists, with apparent knowledge of nuclear physics. He could not be found.

Once again he had vanished, almost as if from the face of the earth.

As I said, I could not resist such an intriguing and amazing enigma.

But where to begin?

Although I had been fascinated by alchemy for many years, my main interest in the occult had centred around ritual and ceremonial magic, of the type practised by Eliphas Levi, Aleister Crowley, Austin Osman Spare, the magicians of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn, and surviving lodges with similar roots. When I talked with other occultists, more knowledgeable than myself, it was confirmed for me that most modern operative groups dealt with alchemy on a purely speculative or spiritual basis. Except, that is, for members of the *Ordo Templi Orientis* continuing, a surviving group of Crowleyites who, among other things, run an alchemical laboratory near Appenzell, Switzerland, and produce 'Paracelsian' remedies. Similar therapeutic tinctures are also being manufactured alchemically by the Paracelsus Research Society, in Salt Lake City, Utah, headed by Frater Albertus Spagyricus (Albert Riedel.)

I learned that M. Eugene Canseliet, Fulcanelli's only surviving pupil, himself a practising alchemist and author of several works, was unable to cope with the massive amount of mail he receives, cannot speak English, and rarely answers letters from strangers. Still less has he the time to answer the questions of those who try to call on him casually, inquiring about the Fulcanelli mystery.

On the few occasions that he has talked publicly about his Master, his answers to questions have been guarded, defensive

and somewhat enigmatic. Always, though, he has insisted that Fulcanelli is a real person and has survived.

The other key personae in the Fulcanelli story - including publishers, chemists, booksellers, artists and close associates - are dead.

So, where to start?

I wrote letters. I talked to people on the international occult grapevine. I read dozens of difficult and abstruse volumes on the subject of alchemy: ancient and modern, Western and Oriental, practical and speculative, metallic and vegetable.

I went to France. The place where it all began one day in 1922 in the alleged and unlikely setting of a gasworks laboratory.

And in Paris, which remains for me one of the world's most exciting capitals, and is the home of a still-flourishing, deeply-rooted occult tradition, I found some of my answers.

At first, I believed that I had discovered the true identity of the man known as Fulcanelli. I learned about this man's youth, his studies, his character, his intellect, his sense of humour, his talents, his poverty - in short, his life-style.

The facts seemed to fit almost perfectly. Then, doubts began to arise. There were too many loose ends, too many questions which refused to be answered.

Even if I were to name this individual here and now, it would mean little to the average reader. For, as I discovered, the matter is not so simple as that. This is a mystery in the true, esoteric sense of the word and not one which can be neatly resolved and parcelled up in the Agatha Christie fashion.

So far as I am concerned, the Fulcanelli file is far from closed. In part, this book attempts to explain why.

Almost on a par with the philosophical and mystical aspects of the Great Work itself, I discovered during my search some profound spiritual truths about the hidden potential that lies untapped within all men. I gained deeper insights into the underlying reasons for Secrecy and Silence within the esoteric levels of the Hermetic Tradition. Most of all, I learned of the unflagging Faith, Trust and Loyalty - concepts all but discarded today - of an old man for the Master of his youth.

* * *

The enigma of Fulcanelli has been with us now, in fragmentary and fleeting form, for more than half a century. Fragmentary, in the sense that several authors, most of them French, have merely summarised the Fulcanelli mystery within the larger context of works on alchemy in general: Pierre Geyraud, Jacques Sadoul, Jacques Bergier and Louis Pauwels are among the forefront of these. Fleeting, because although the subject of Fulcanelli's identity has occasionally been raised in magazine articles – again usually in the context of much broader vistas – and one or another opinion about his reality and the value of his work has been expressed, the matter has ultimately been left, as it were, in the Unsolved Mysteries file.

In this work I hope to demonstrate that Fulcanelli was a real and living person and not the imaginary figment or alter-ego of someone else. That, in so far as his influence extends, he lives on, and will doubtless continue to do so for much more than the previous half-century or so that his elusive phantom has flickered in and out of speculative alchemical literature.

There has not, so far in English, appeared a full and definitive work on Fulcanelli. I doubt if there ever will be. Any attempt to analyse and interpret Fulcanelli's significance and writings alone would probably lead to a morass of literature on a par with the various 'expositions' of Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, or the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. Besides, the very nature of the life of an Adept is moulded in such a way that only occasional flashes of clarity are visible between long, impenetrable interludes of silence, vagueness and elusiveness.

In this book however, I believe that I have set out, as far as can ever be outlined at this distance in time, a reasonable and, where possible, well-documented case for the reality and importance of the man within the alchemical tradition; a man who chose to hide behind an alchemical pseudonym and, in the tradition of many Philosophers of Fire before him, to vanish with as little trace as possible.

The basic explanation for this phenomenon – for what else can one call a genuine, twentieth-century alchemist? – is both profound and mundane. But behind it there extend much more complex considerations upon which the profane outsider like myself can at present only speculate.

In order to place Fulcanelli in his proper perspective as one of a long line of successful Initiates reaching back into documented history and beyond, it has been necessary to re-trace something of the origins of alchemy and its manner of dissemination, and to examine the lives of other alchemists which, to some extent, his own has paralleled. It has also been thought advisable to attempt to explain some of the basic philosophical and mystical structure which lies behind the vast, complex and seemingly incomprehensible world of alchemical thought, in a totally fresh light.

This does not, however, purport to be a complete – nor necessarily exact – exposition of the secrets of the alchemical art. The truths of alchemy are, it would seem, unfolded only to those who *practise* the art on several levels – physical, mental and spiritual – and even then, such insights would appear to be granted only to a favoured few.

Alchemy cannot be taught exclusively in books. Actual personal experience and intuitive faculties play a large role and, if the seeker is fortunate or, more important, properly prepared, the appearance of a Teacher is said to lighten his way. ('When the pupil is ready, the Master will appear,' is a common alchemical tenet.) Also, we are told, a profound and genuine awareness of the omnipresence of God or Universal Intelligence in Nature, plus an appreciation of the Oneness of the entire Cosmos, is essential to the unlocking of the gateways to the supramundane.

One of the best analogies I have heard, summing up the difficulty of conveying this higher experience to the unenlightened, came in a recent BBC television documentary, *The Long Search*. In it, a Buddhist master told the presenter, Ronald Eyre, something to the effect that it is impossible for a tadpole to be taught what it is like to be a frog. The tadpole can only learn by *becoming*. And even given that hint of the incommunicability of the mystical experience to the outsider, one is tempted to echo the question of Byron: 'Who will then explain the explained?'

Throughout the whole history of mysticism, of which alchemy represents not a minor part, the waves of rationalism and logic have dashed themselves ineffectually against the rocks of intuition and enlightenment. Illumination cannot be

proven, therefore it must be self-delusory – so says the extreme rationalist. You cannot prove anything – you can only *know* it, for it lies within you, answers the Enlightened One.

Yet of the two, in my humble opinion, the mystic emerges in a far superior position. For although he may not be able to explain his attainment and insights in everyday terms, he can, he will assure you, point the Way – providing you are prepared to give yourself completely and utterly to the quest.

At this point the rationalist turns back to his standards of measure and judgement, his finite and restricted systems of observation and assessment; a stance which, in my view, is even more dogmatic and damning than that of the taciturn sage.

I should point out, however, that I am not defending *carte blanche* the persistent posture of circumspection and deliberate mystification for its own sake as a guaranteed sign of inner wisdom. Charlatans and pretenders have frequently sought refuge behind the cloak of the true Initiate.

Nonetheless, it is not difficult to understand why the man who hid behind the alias of Fulcanelli during his physical presence in Paris in the early decades of this century, chose to do so. As a writer, even on the most basic level, I know how precious is the facility of being able to shut oneself off from the outer world in order to get on with the work in progress. Even the slightest interruption in the most innocent form – an unexpected phone call, an unannounced visitor, or even the inconvenient arrival of mealtimes – can escalate into an infuriating plague of distraction which, it often seems at the time, is the effort of some external, disembodied force, intent on aborting the entire purpose of one's project.

How much more important, then, must anonymity have been to a man on the Path to Supreme Illumination?

Yet now that his work is apparently done, now that he has not been seen by anyone for the last twenty-five years or so – longer, if the word of M. Canseliet is deemed unacceptable – the actual identity of the man behind the Fulcanelli mask seems relatively unimportant, except perhaps to the idly curious, or to the historian of alchemy who simply wishes to set the record straight. What is really important, in my submission, is for the rest of humanity to attempt to grasp exactly

what the alchemical tradition and its search really means, and at the same time that the successful Adept should keep from the *undeserving* the actual *secret* of how he reached his superior level of knowledge and consciousness – a task in which, so far, Fulcanelli would seem to have succeeded.

There is no harm in giving clues, as in a crossword puzzle, with which the intelligent can work. But to spell out the complete answers would seem to defeat the whole purpose of the exercise. And that purpose is *self*-enlightenment. No seeker can be considered worthy if the Holy Grail is handed to him on a plate, gift-wrapped and labelled, with instructions for its use. These are for the individual to discover for himself.

Whatever he may have achieved later, it is almost certain that Fulcanelli began his quest as an ordinary, unprivileged mortal, confronted like the rest of us with a seemingly unfathomable universe. The fact that he plunged into his search completely and, it would seem, answered at least for himself some of the vital questions about the universe and man's place in it, seems all the more reason why we should attempt to learn as much as possible about this unusual individual.

In toto, this book represents what, by fact and by inference, I have been able to understand about the role of an alchemist in history. I pass this information on both for the benefit of those who are already acquainted with the Fulcanelli enigma – and those to whom contact with his quite tangible charisma might prove a totally new and fascinating experience.

It is a story which, I hope, will be meaningful not only to those who study arcane areas of wisdom, but to those who have hitherto mistakenly believed that alchemy was but the poor, misguided forbear of modern chemistry. It is a record from which practically everyone should be able to learn something about the magnificent and sublime spiritual potential that each human being enshrines; and how one man, eschewing contemporary 'values', managed to tap that spirit and unite himself with the greater, Universal Essence of cosmic wisdom.

K.R.J.

Otford, Kent, England. 1979.

PART ONE

THE SECRET
ART OF HERMES

To all true seekers of the Light. May what they find herein sustain them in their search for the Quintessence; the Stone of the Philosophers, true Wisdom and perfect Happiness, the Summum Bonum.

- Dr. Israel Regardie, *The Golden Dawn*,
(Aries Press, 1937-40).

I

Black is Wise

Alchemical gold is better than gold, but real alchemists are rare, and so are true Sufis. Who has but a smattering of Sufism is not superior to a learned man.

- Sheikh Ghazali: *Alchemy of Happiness*, (1058-1111).

THE TERM alchemy is generally supposed to have derived from the Arabic name for Egypt - *al khem* - 'the Black Land.' It was thought to be an allusion to the rich, black, alluvial soil of the fertile Nile Valley.¹ By association, it also came to be regarded as the Black Art, although it has perhaps never been held in such trepidation as other, more daunting branches of occultism, such as Magic, Sorcery, Satanism, Goetia and Necromancy.

But the Arabic language is so constructed that many different meanings can be derived from tri-lateral root-words and their variations. And the writer and Eastern esoteric scholar Idries Shah Sayed has shown that for 'black', we really ought to read 'wise.' The confusion arises from a play on two roots, FHM and FHMM, pronounced *fecham* and *facham*, meaning 'black' and 'wise', respectively.

The FHM root can also mean 'knowledge' or 'understanding', depending on context and pronunciation.

Thus, the so-called Black Art of Egypt is an indication neither of rich, dark, soil, nor the dark doings of evil magicians - but of the *Wise* Art of the ancient Egyptians.²

¹ For an elaboration on this and other less convincing derivations, see Jack Lindsay: *The Origins of Alchemy in Graeco-Roman Egypt*, (Frederick Muller Ltd., 1970.)

² See Idries Shah: *The Sufis* (W.H. Allen & Co., 1964; Jonathan Cape Paperback, 1969, 1971.)

Because ancient Egypt possessed a culture and civilisation far in advance of her contemporaries and because alchemy dates back to murky antiquity, it was only natural to assume that the Art originated there. Certainly, the earliest known record of the term is in Egyptian writings. And the oldest known book on alchemy, *Physika kai Mystika*, was written around 200 BC by Bolos of Mendes.

From an academic viewpoint, it was the researches of Pierre Eugene Marcellin Berthelot into the 3rd-century AD Leyden Papyrus – discovered in Thebes in the 19th century – which brought modern acceptance of Egypt as the home of alchemy.³ Egyptian craftsmen had clearly achieved high standards in metallurgy, producing alloys of silver and copper that had all the appearances of gold. (See Fig. 1.)



Fig. 1. Ancient Egyptian metallurgists at work.

The Leyden Papyrus contains recipes for changing the colours of various metals to make them appear like gold or silver. It even boasts that these methods will foil all expert attempts to detect the true nature of the treated metal.

But there is sound evidence that all of this is merely an external, profane and inaccurate concept of the roots of alchemy proper.

Traditionally, the founder of alchemy is held to be Hermes Trismegistos. This is the Greek name for a legendary Egyptian adept, ruler and god – Thoth or Tehuti, the father of all knowledge (See Fig. 2). Chemical terminology down to the

³ *Collection des anciens alchimistes grecs*, 3 vols., (Paris, 1888).

present day has been influenced by this tradition – as, for example, in the phrase, ‘hermetically sealed.’ The secret of the divine Hermes was regarded as an esoteric art, revealed only to the sacred school of priest-kings and their progeny, according to Zosimos of Panopolis, who wrote in the 3rd century when Egypt was a Roman province.



Fig. 2. Tehuti-Thoth-Hermes

Who was Thoth-Hermes? He was the Egyptian god of wisdom, and the divine scribe, inventor of writing and supposed compiler of *The Book of the Dead*. Often depicted with the head of an ibis, symbolising his spiritual and intellectual attainment, and holding the reed stylus and colour palette of the scribe, it was he who recorded the deeds of men which were read out in the Hall of Judgement before Osiris, and recorded the verdict when the hearts of the dead were weighed against their earthly actions. He carried the souls of the departed to the underworld and was the messenger of the gods – a role emphasized in his later, Greek and Roman incarnations as Hermes and Mercury.

According to the Egyptologist E. A. Wallis Budge, ‘even the world itself came into existence through the utterance of a word by Thoth’⁴ – a concept not unlike the Hebrew version of Creation through a spoken command.

The Arab traveller Ibn-Batuta claimed that by astrology, Thoth-Hermes was able to forecast the Deluge – and built the Pyramids of Giza to preserve his science and wisdom.

⁴ *Egyptian Magic*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972, 1975.)

Although his influence extended throughout Egypt, Thoth's capital was Behdet - later, under the Greeks, Hermopolis - on the mouth of the Nile. But, most important of all, Thoth-Hermes was the link between mankind and the Universal Intelligence, and the source of the mystic revelation at the heart of the Hermetic Mysteries.

Through imaginative legend, or perhaps even in fact, figures such as Moses came to be regarded as Adepts of the Hermetic Art. The fact that Moses was initiated into the Egyptian priesthood and was a magician, plus the great lifespans of the Patriarchs, helped to support the notion that he was an alchemist. So, too, did passages from the Old Testament:

And he [Moses] took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strewed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it.

- *Exodus*, 32, 20.

Perhaps Aaron, also, whose name is thought to be Egyptian for 'oracle-maker', was an alchemist:

And I [Aaron] said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it to me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf.

- *Exodus* 32, 24.

Whatever the truth, many other actual and semi-legendary characters came to be regarded as practitioners of alchemy: Cleopatra, since she dissolved a pearl in wine, and had alchemical writings spuriously attributed to her⁵; Democritus, born about 470 BC, because he became identified with Bolos, and is supposed to have written a treatise on the preparation of gold, silver, gems and purple dye; even the mad Roman Emperor Caligula (AD 12-41) was said by Pliny to have tried to make gold from orpiment.

These apocryphal claims aside, and whether there ever was an historical figure upon whom Hermes was based, someone in remote antiquity laid down a system of esoteric wisdom which

⁵ *The Gold-Making of Cleopatra and The Dialogue of Cleopatra and the Philosophers*, 2nd century AD.

evolved into a large body of writing which can be classified as alchemical. And although this material sometimes used metallurgical terminology, it has little in common with the early Egyptian gold-fakers.

If Egypt was the breeding-ground of alchemy, it was the Jews and Arabs - in particular the Sufis - who acted as carriers and preservers of the purist form of Hermetic Wisdom. Indeed, it is within Sufism that we find actual evidence of a chain of transmission - the passing on of inner secrets from Master to Initiate over the centuries - bringing alchemy out of Egypt and developing its teachings in an elaborate, allegorical code.

But what is Sufism? Like alchemy, it defies satisfactory definition in words; its understanding demands experience and participation. Robert Graves describes the Sufis as 'an ancient spiritual freemasonry whose origins have never been traced or dated', although he adds that 'the characteristic Sufic signature is found in widely dispersed literature from at least the second millennium BC.'⁶

Idries Shah Sayed defines a Sufi as one who seeks freedom by alternately viewing life from a standpoint of identification and detachment. Like the Qabalist or magician, he believes he can attune himself to the entire pattern of life. And yet he also tries to live a normal, practical life within society.

In Sufism, as in the case of Qabalistic philosophy, man is considered to be a part of the Eternal Whole to which everything must eventually return. As the Qabalist Moses de Leon wrote: 'Man is a synthesis of all the spiritual forces which have gone into the work of creation.'⁷ The Sufi's task is to make himself ready for reunion with the Eternal Oneness. This takes the form of an effort of self-purification, an attempt to harness the soul to the body correctly and to control it. The result is said to be the Perfected Man.

'In order to approach the Sufi Way, the Seeker must realise that he is, largely, a bundle of what are nowadays

⁶ Introduction to *The Sufis*, by Idries Shah.

⁷ Quoted by Gershom G. Scholem: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, (Schocken Books Inc., New York, 1954.)

called conditionings – fixed ideas and prejudices, automatic responses sometimes which have occurred through the training of others. Man is not as free as he thinks he is. The first step is for the individual to get away from thinking that he understands, and really understand'.⁸

In a sense, the Sufis are both organised and disorganised. While there are semi-military and semi-monastic Orders – on which many medieval Christian brotherhoods were based – there are also individual Sufi Seekers and teachers dispersed in all walks of life throughout the world. And yet the Sufi does not necessarily deliberately travel about, comparing various religions and theologies, siphoning off what seems to fit his philosophy. His Way or 'journey' can be an inner one. At the same time, however, he must not cut himself off entirely from everyday life.

'Man is destined to live a social life,' says Akbar Khan's 17th-century Persian MS, *Tasawwuf-i Azim*. 'His part is to be with other men. In serving Sufism he is serving the Infinite, serving himself and serving society. He cannot cut himself off from any one of these obligations and become or remain a Sufi. The only discipline worth while is that which is achieved in the midst of temptation. A man who, like the anchorite, abandons the world and cuts himself off from temptations and distractions cannot achieve power. For power is that which is won through being wrested from the midst of weakness and uncertainty. The ascetic living a wholly monastic life is deluding himself.'⁹

What exactly is this 'power' which the Sufi hopes to attain? Among the Sufi schools, there have evolved Orders of Dervishes and Fakirs. (This latter is not to be confused with the common street magician or juggler – Fakirs means, literally, 'the Humble Ones'.)

Humility is paramount as the original aim of the true Seeker. He must eschew worldly considerations until he understands himself and his role in life properly.

'This is not, in fact, contradictory,' Shah comments. 'For a

⁸ Shah, op cit.

⁹ Quoted by Idries Shah: *Oriental Magic*, (Rider & Co., 1956; Octagon Press, 1974.)

man may legitimately enjoy the things of the world, provided that he has learnt humility in their application.'¹⁰

The concentrated application of this philosophy apparently results in such refined control of the mind that, to the onlooker, the Sufi Fakir or Dervish appears to possess supernatural powers. Walking on water, levitation, bi-location, travelling great distances in an instant, flying, and even the transcendence of time are among the more spectacular feats which have been attested to over the centuries by reliable witnesses.

Of these phenomena, Shah says: 'It is necessary to point out here ... that such manifestations may, if true, merely be the application of secrets of nature which as yet may be imperfectly understood by orthodox science.'¹¹

Sufic Orders are known as *Tariqas*, or Paths, all of which are claimed to date back at least to Mohammed himself and even beyond. The derivation of the name Sufi itself is uncertain, although the generally accepted definition is that it stems from *souf*, the Arabic name for the wool of their robes, or from *safa*, meaning purity. The major contemporary Orders are the Naqshbandiyya, Chishtiyya, Qadriyya and Suharwardiyya; others may be found wherever Islam has spread. Admission is through sponsorship and *initiation*.

Like the Great White Brotherhood concept of Western occultism, the Sufi system is said to have an invisible rulership, chief of which is known as the *Qutub*. He is considered to have achieved supreme enlightenment – the degree of *Wasl*, or 'Union with the Infinite.' His identity is known only to a select few and he keeps in touch with the Leaders of the various Orders by telepathy, or by the faculty of transcending time and space.

Promotion within an Order – as in the art of alchemy – is not an inevitability. It is supposed to occur spontaneously, *when-ever the subject is ready or prepared*.

Among the other amazing achievements attributed to the Sufis are that:

'... almost one thousand years before Einstein, the dervish Hujwiri was in technical literature discussing the

¹⁰ Shah, op cit.

¹¹ Ibid.

identity of time and space in applied Sufi experience.'¹²

'They ... formulated a science of evolution over six hundred years before Darwin.'¹²

'The Jungian archetypal theory did not originate with Professor Jung, but was stated by the Sufi master, Ibn El-Arabi ...'¹²

Writing in 1964, Shah estimated that some 20 to 40 million people were members of, or connected with, Sufi schools, and added that they were on the increase. Among well-known historical and contemporary figures who were directly influenced by Sufism, he names Raymond Lully, Goethe, Sir Richard Burton, President de Gaulle and Dag Hammarskjöld.

Much of Sufi philosophy can be found reflected in the allegorical character of alchemical texts. The writings of the alchemists proliferated during the fourth and fifth centuries and speculative or spiritual alchemy had reached its zenith in the schools of Alexandria towards the end of AD 400.

Among notable authors and exponents of the art around this period, the following may be noted:

Synesius, Bishop of Ptolemais from AD 401, who wrote on alchemy, dream-interpretation and reincarnation; Olympiodorus, who credits Mary the Jewess and Synesius as his inspirational sources; Aeneas of Gaza, who wrote on immortality and resurrection c. AD 480, and Stephanus of Alexandria, of the court of the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius (died AD 641), who wrote about the transformation processes in plants and minerals.

Outwardly, the flourishing of Islam following the death of its Prophet Mohammed in AD 632 did not immediately seem to promise the furtherance of the arts and sciences. But on the inner levels of philosophy, architecture, literature, theology and metaphysics, the Muslim schools developed impressive esoteric doctrines. They re-synthesized ancient wisdom, drawing on the traditions of the Hanifs, the Hermetic, Qabalistic and neo-Platonic systems, along with portions of Coptic, Gnostic and Nestorian Christian teachings, among others. The names of many Arab, Persian and Jewish masters, emerging

¹² Shah: *The Sufis*. Note: Ibn El-Arabi was born in 1164 and studied in Spain for 30 years.

from these re-formulated schools, are among the most noteworthy of the early alchemical authors that have come down to us.

Most famous of these was Jabir Ibn el-Hayyan, better known in the West as Geber. It was from his name and the apparent unintelligibility of alchemical writings in general that the derisory descriptive noun 'gibberish' derived. Jabir was also known as El-Sufi - the Sufi - and in the Middle Ages, alchemy was called the Sophic (= Sufic) Art.

Jabir's Master was the Imam Jafar Sadiq (AD 700-765), 'the Great Sufi teacher whose name appears on almost all the "chains of transmission" of the lore of Sufism, *which is itself called alchemy* by such authorities as Rumi and Ghazali.'¹³ (My italics.)

Jabir, the 'Arabian Prince and Philosopher' lived about AD 721-776 and his writings indicate that he went in for practical alchemical experiment. He believed that the planets influenced the formation of metals in the earth and propounded the theory that this process involved the union of sulphur and mercury, although he clearly did not mean these substances literally. He saw sulphur as the bearer of hot and dry qualities and mercury of cold and moist ones. These qualities, he said, combined with matter to form the four elements: Fire, hot and dry; Air, hot and moist; Water, cold and moist; Earth, cold and dry. He claimed to have made gold in experiments based around these principles.

Jabir's Master, Jafar Sadiq, was the Sixth Imam or Leader, 'descendant of Mohammed through Fatima, and believed by many to be of the direct line which transmitted the inner teaching of Islam, confided to them by Mohammed himself, called Sufism.'¹⁴

According to Sufi tradition, the alchemical secret was brought out of Egypt some time in the 9th century by Dhu'l-Nun, the Egyptian King or Lord of the Fish, one of the most famous of classical Sufi teachers, and founder of the Dervish Order of the Builders.

Despite the fact that Jabir's works did not become generally

¹³ Shah, op cit.

¹⁴ Shah, op cit.

known in the West until the 14th century, some sprinklings of alchemical lore filtered out long before this period, even among Christian leaders. Pope Leo III (reigned AD 795-816), who crowned Charlemagne as Emperor, is said to have studied alchemy and to have given his emperor a magical treatise, the *Enchiridion*. Letters from Charlemagne confirm its power in 'warding off dangers from man and beast.' Nicephorus, Patriarch of Constantinople (reigned AD 806-815) is another religious leader who seems to have embraced alchemy.

Possibly almost as well-known as Jabir is Rhazes, born Zakariya al-Razi in AD 864 in Persia. He was a brilliant philosopher, physician and encyclopaedist, who wrote on an amazing variety of subjects: philosophy, alchemy, mathematics, logic, ethics, metaphysics, religion, grammar, music, chess and draughts. In his alchemical writings he describes his practical equipment - athanor (furnace), alembics, mortars, and pestles. He outlined the making of gold and silver elixirs. But when the Emir Almansour, ruler of Rhazes' native province, wanted a demonstration of gold-making, he failed. He is supposed to have been beaten on the head with one of his weighty volumes - a punishment which is said to have caused his subsequent blindness, although it is more likely that he developed cataracts. He died aged about 60 around AD 923.

Avicenna (AD 980-1037) is another familiar name to Western students of alchemy. Known in Arabic as Ibn Sina, he was a philosopher, and although he wrote on alchemical theory, he denied that it was possible to manufacture gold.

Among other scholars of note in this epoch, who studied and wrote on alchemy, were Al Majrati (Maslama ibn Ahmad) and Mohammed ibn Umail, who wrote curiously-titled works such as *The Silvery Water and the Starry Earth*, and *Epistle of the Sun to the Crescent Moon*. Both lived under the Spanish Caliphate of Al-Hakam II (AD 961-976). Also worthy of mention is the Persian Abu Mansur Muwaffah, who made many chemical discoveries, including the distinction between sodium carbonate (natron) and potassium carbonate. He also mentions the surgical use of a plaster, made from egg-white and heated gypsum. Finally, it is also worth mentioning Gerbert, Pope Sylvester II (AD 940-1003), an accredited magician who also studied alchemy.

Like the Egyptians, Greeks and Jews, the Arabs also acknowledged Hermes Trismegistos, whom they called Idris, as the founder of alchemy. It is interesting to note that Idries Shah speculates that the Thrice-Greatest title afforded to Hermes may imply that he was a composite: three different teachers personified under one name. He quotes the Spanish-Arab historian Said of Toledo, who died in 1069, who says that before the Deluge, all sciences began with Hermes, who lived in Sa'id, in Upper Egypt. He was known as Enoch to the Jews.

The Greek lexicon or encyclopaedic dictionary of about AD 1000, known as *Suidas*, places Hermes as having lived in pre-Pharaonic times, about 400 years before Moses.

Says Said of Toledo: 'He was the first who spoke of the material of the superior world and of planetary movements. He built temples to worship God ... medicine and poetry were his functions ... (He) warned of a catastrophe of fire and water before the Flood ... After the Flood, the sciences, including alchemy and magic, were carried out at Memphis, under the more renowned Hermes the second.'

Shah, equating the attributes of Hermes with those of the Sufi ideal says that he 'moved, like Mercury, his equivalent, at immense speed, negating time and space, just in the way that inner experience does. He is an athlete, a developed man, and is considered therefore to resemble the "perfected man" of the Sufi in his outward aspect. In his earlier statues, he is shown as a matured man, a man of age and wisdom, thought of as correct results of right development. He invented the lyre and caused, as Sufis and others do, an altered state in the hearers by means of music ...

'In the threefold figure - Egyptian, Greek and Roman - like has been equated with like. His association with a form of wisdom which was transmitted to man from divine sources remains. It is undoubtedly far more comprehensive than the alchemical format which was later on given to it.'¹⁵

When the Saracen armies pushed westwards into Spain, initiates of the secret Sufi schools of esotericism went with them and, along with Jewish rabbis and Qabalists, established teaching centres. We know the names of some of the Masters

¹⁵ Shah, op cit.

of these schools and where they were based: Ibn Massarra of Cordoba, Ibn Barrajan of Seville, Abu Bakr of Granada (born in Majorca), and Ibn Qasi of Agarabis, Portugal. From around the 9th century, the esoteric teachings of these schools began to infiltrate the rest of Europe, via various disciplinary and allegorical systems which we will look at in detail in the next chapter.

One highly influential individual in this process was the 12th century philosopher Adelard of Bath, who translated Euclid's *Elements* from the Arabic. He also took to England the *Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Sincerity*, an original Arabic work by Ikhwan El Safa.

It was from this source that the important Jewish mysticomagical system, the Qabalah, was derived. The *Encyclopaedia* had been taken to Spain some time in the 10th or early 11th century by El Majritti of Cordoba, or his disciple, El Karmani. It contained the concept of eight elements of God which, in the 11th century, became adapted and supplemented as the ten Sephiroth of the Qabalistic Tree of Life.

Idries Shah comments:

'The Cabala¹⁶ came from the region of the Faithful Brothers to two places - Italy and Spain. Its system of word manipulation may be derived from parallel and ancient Jewish teaching, but it is founded upon Arabic grammar ... There is no doubt that the Arab study of grammar and the meaning of words is at the base of the useage of words in the Cabala for mystical purposes. Arabic grammar was the model for the Hebrew grammar. The first Hebrew grammar was written by the Jew Saadi (died 942) and was, like all the early ones, in Arabic ... It was not until the mid-twelfth century that Hebrew grammar started to be studied by Jews in Hebrew.'¹⁷

Another man who undoubtedly drew to Spain many of the

various thinkers and philosopher-scientists who were to become links in the transmission of the Secret Art to the rest of Europe, was Robert of Chester. English-born, he travelled to Spain in the 11th century where he became abbot of a monastery. He translated works from the Arabic, including one on astrology, *The Koran*, and the *Algebra* of Al-Khwarizmi, into Latin, thus introducing a new branch of mathematics. He also translated an alchemical work, which he completed in 1144, and in which he describes a successful transmutation in the presence of the son of the Caliph Yazid I.

As more and more scholars flocked to Spain's centres of learning, obviously aware that something quite unusual was happening there, selected initiates returned to their homes to pass on the teachings to those who were deemed worthy. Alchemy thus became a major preoccupation in Europe from around 1200 - an influence that prevailed powerfully for some 500 years.

Popularly, it was regarded as a mysterious method of making gold. But in reality it was more than that. Much more.

¹⁶ Although Idries Shah uses this spelling, I have chosen to retain that of Papus and S. L. MacGregor Mathers, in order to distinguish between the Jewish Qabalah and the phonetic cabala referred to later in relation to Fulcanelli.

¹⁷ Shah, op cit.

II

The Crucible of Culture

The secret protects itself. It is found only in the spirit and the practice of the Work.

- Sufi aphorism, quoted by Idries Shah: *The Sufis*.

ALCHEMY IS not dead. It is alive. In tiny, isolated pockets, among small, exclusive groups, quietly operating today in Britain, the United States, the Orient and, probably more actively than anywhere else in the West, on the Continent of Europe.

There is a fashionable stance among those who have 'read a little' that alchemy is not worth considering; that it has 'been explained away.'

There are two main arguments to support this supposition and they may be summarised as follows:

1) Alchemy was simply the early and largely misguided struggle of a few deluded old recluses who, sweating over their furnaces and peering into their murky glass alembics, could not separate myth from reality, the spiritual from the physical, the illusory from the scientific. During their tireless, trial-and-error efforts, several achieved little more than blowing up their laboratories - and themselves. Many more ended up in the poorhouse, their meagre resources exhausted by their vainglorious persistence. Yet others died broken - in body and spirit - either in prison or under torture, as monarchs and princes tried to wrest their secrets from them. A small minority - completely by accident, the scientific persuasion would have us believe - actually managed to contribute some practical chemical knowledge. In short, alchemy was the poor and mainly ineffectual cousin of modern chemistry.

2) Alchemy was nothing more than a crude, intuitive form of psychoanalysis, laced with religious and visionary ideals. The physical aspects of the art were merely an elaborate blind; it was the transmutation of the Inner or Higher Self - not the base metals - that was the absolute goal. This school of thought grew up mainly through an imperfect understanding of what the psychoanalyst Dr. C. G. Jung was trying to impart in his massive - and very valuable - alchemical studies.

Like most misconceptions, both these standpoints contain elements of truth.

Alchemy *did* pre-date orthodox chemistry; it *did* contribute towards man's greater understanding and classification of matter; his knowledge of the elements, of medicine, homoeopathy, herbalism and a string of other useful spin-offs. *But, significantly, it continued to flourish AFTER the basics of pure chemical science had been firmly laid down.*

Alchemy was also, it is true, an inner search, an attempted confrontation of the mundane ego with the inner, hidden and unpredictable regions of the unconscious, and possibly even deeper levels as yet undefined by psychology or neurology. At the least, it would seem it represented the process which Jung termed 'individuation' and 'integration of the personality.' And it most certainly *did* weave the imagery of both Christian and pre-Christian religious concepts into its elaborate, allegorical language.

Nonetheless, as in the case of chemistry, alchemy *pre-dated yet continued to exist alongside both primitive and organised religious systems and the later science of psychology.*

The problem with the current popular attitude towards alchemy arises because we of the 20th century are still suffering partly from the after-effects of the 19th-century scientific spirit: the conceit that everything has been discovered and all that remains is to fill in a few missing details and flourishes and make only slight adjustments to established 'knowledge' and 'facts.' We suffer from a technological smugness which we use to hide our real deficiencies. The problem with this hangover fallacy - from any point of view - is that it fails to take into account a gaping chasm in our so-called knowledge: that of the workings and hidden potential of the inner human spirit, both individually and collectively. We have

conquered outer space, but inner space – the individual, miniature cosmos envisaged by the ancients as contained within each human being – is still obscure, unexplored territory as far as the majority are concerned. This is a region which has been explored only haphazardly and imperfectly by many occultists and psychologists and, it would seem, perhaps only exhaustively, more conclusively – yet secretly – by Initiates and Adepts of the ancient wisdom. Materialists tend to scoff at or dismiss the idea of a Secret Doctrine, possessed by previous cultures and civilisations, and protected by an exclusive few. But the current mental state of mankind – both inside and outside our psychiatric institutions – indicates that something of this nature is definitely missing from the human potential.

In rejecting the symbolic teachings of the Ancient Chaldeans and Egyptians, along with more obviously fallacious notions of the past, like the geocentric theory or the flat-earth delusion, science throws out the dishes with the washing-up water.

This unfortunate attitude is to some extent being gradually readjusted by one or two progressive, open-minded thinkers. But, in general, a rather more cautious outlook prevails – that the civilisations of antiquity have little new to teach us, except perhaps as upholders of systems which were little more than archaeological or sociological curiosities. If they'd been any good – they'd have survived, is a psychological non-sequitur which is rarely voiced but often implied.

Some enlightened thinkers have tried to modify this blinkered outlook – men like Jung, who saw deep knowledge of the human unconscious symbolised in such systems as alchemy, the I Ching, the Qabalah and Oriental mysticism. But their evidence has for the most part been either grossly misunderstood, rejected out of hand, or simply fell on deaf or intellectually unreceptive ears.

So far as the orthodox scientific outlook is concerned, such knowledge, gained from thousands of years of meditation, deep, inner, self-examination and passed on through oral or written tradition, is non-veridical, non-demonstrable and non-repeatable under ideal – i.e., laboratory – conditions. Therefore, it is inaccurate.

Granted, the study of human consciousness is made infinitely

difficult from an analytical point of view, simply because each individual probably differs more inwardly than personality and physical characteristics do outwardly. But even in particle physics today, the role of the individual observer in any given experiment is acknowledged as a crucial and influential factor.

Jung himself was not unaware of the problem: 'Any attempt to determine the nature of the unconscious state runs up against the same difficulties as atomic physics: the very act of observation alters the object observed.'¹

Years before him, the Sufi Master Pir-i-Do-Sara was wrestling with much the same paradox: 'Can you imagine a mind observing the whole of itself – if it were all engaged in observation, what would it be observing? If it were all engaged in being mind, what would do the observing? Observation of self is necessary while there is a self as distinct from the nonself part ...'²

The overall result of the refusal or inability to accept the importance of inner exploration has been, as Jung warned more than twenty years ago, that man is in grave danger of losing his spirituality; of dying from the inside outwards, both individually and collectively.

Jung agreed wholeheartedly with Aldous Huxley who, in *Grey Eminence* (1943), wrote:

'By the end of the seventeenth century, mysticism had lost its old significance in Christianity and is more than half dead. "Well, what of it?" may be asked. "Why shouldn't it die? What use is it when it's alive?" The answer to these questions is that where there is no vision, the people perish; and that, if those who are the salt of the earth lose their savour, there is nothing to keep that earth disinfected, nothing to prevent it from falling into complete decay. The mystics are channels through which a little knowledge of reality filters down into our human universe of ignorance

¹ *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Collected Works Vol. 14, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd ed., 1970.)

² *Mountain of Illumination*, XVI, verses 9951-57 MS; quoted by Idries Shah: *The Sufis*

and illusion. *A totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind and insane.*' (My italics).

Jung's own assessment of this very dangerous - if not fatal - tendency, was summed up by him in one of his three large volumes on alchemy, *Mysterium Coniunctionis*:

'The discerning person knows and feels that his psyche is disquieted by the loss of something that was the lifeblood of his ancestors. The undiscerning miss nothing, and only discover afterwards in the papers (much too late) the alarming symptoms that have now become "real" in the outside world because they were not perceived before, inside, in oneself ...

'Once the symptoms are really outside in some form of socio-political insanity, it is impossible to convince anybody that the conflict is in the psyche of every individual, since he is now quite sure where his enemy is. Then, the conflict which remains an intra-psychic phenomenon in the mind of the discerning person, takes place on the plane of projection in the form of political tension and murderous violence.'³

Jung goes on to say that what has resulted in this state of affairs is a form of brain-washing; a process in which the individual is convinced that the only true meaning of his existence is as a member of society and that his individual psyche is utterly meaningless and of no value. His only hope of salvation is outside - in the 'community.'

Once this is achieved, Jung says, the depersonalised subject can then be manipulated like a child - in an environment in which everything emanates from without; a state in which, Jung observes, he would rather exist anyway. He relies entirely on others - external factors - and, if anything goes wrong, someone or something else is to blame.

'When he no longer knows by what his soul is sustained, the potential of the unconscious is increased and takes the lead. Desirousness overpowers him, and illusory goals ... excite his greed. The beast of prey seizes hold of him and soon makes him forget that he is a human being. His animal

³ Jung, op cit.

affects hamper any reflection that might stand in the way of his infantile wish-fulfilments, filling him instead with a feeling of a new-won right to existence and intoxicating him with the lust for booty and blood.'⁴

The analytical mythologist Joseph Campbell saw much the same problem - and acknowledged the real value of mysticism:

'It is a law of our subject [mythology and religion], proven time and time again, that where the orthodoxies of the world go apart, the mystic way unites. The orthodoxies are concerned primarily with the maintenance of a certain social order, within the pale of which the individual is to function; in the interest of which a certain "system of sentiments" must be instilled into every member; and in defense of which all deviants are to be, one way or another, either reformed, deformed, or liquidated. The mystic way, on the other hand, plunges within, to those nerve centres that are in all members of the human race alike, and are at once the well springs and ultimate receptacles of life and all experiences of life.'⁵

It should now be quite apparent why the Sufis insist on a dual approach to self-improvement - by both facing up to the problems of the 'inner journey and search' and equally standing up to the difficulties and vicissitudes of everyday life. If this equilibrium can be achieved and maintained, the subject can quite genuinely feel a fully rounded-out individual; ready to take a further step up the evolutionary ladder of spiritual attainment.

What Jung suggests as a solution to the dilemma is more or less the same. The individual should, he says, recognize his internal conflicts as something from which he can benefit, rather than using them as excuses for attacking others:

'... if fate should exact a debt from him in the form of guilt, it is a debt to himself. Then he will recognise the worth of his psyche, for nobody can owe a debt to a mere

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *The Masks of God: Occidental Mythology*, (Souvenir Press Ltd., 1974.)

nothing. But when he loses his own values, he becomes a hungry robber, the wolf, lion and other ravening beasts which for the alchemists symbolized the appetites that break loose when the black waters of chaos - i.e. the unconsciousness of projection - have swallowed up the king.⁶

Jung is, of course, writing mainly for those with some psychological knowledge and his reasoning may not be perfectly clear to the layman. To sum up, then, what he seems to be saying is this:

The denial or lack of recognition of the individual psyche manifests externally and collectively in the turmoil and chaos and violence we see around us every day. In other words, the conflicts which assail society really begin internally - within the individual mind. A person who is unaware of this allows the destructive elements of the unconscious to rule him and his actions. Instead of permitting this, a person should view his internal conflicts as something from which he can learn more about his true self and develop it - instead of projecting his frustrations onto his fellow-men and blaming external and, in reality, secondary effects, rather than causes.

Jung saw his own solution as part of the process which the alchemists were trying to perfect - in the face-to-face confrontation of the superficial ego with the unconscious. While Jung used 'individuation' and 'integration' to describe this process, the mystic expresses it in much more simple terms:

'How can you know anything of life and the universe around you, when you know nothing of your true self?'

This is, in essence, the primary objective of the Sufi - and the alchemist. It was the first step towards what he hoped would eventually be the utter transformation of himself: the raising of his understanding and spirit to a condition of Supreme Illumination. En route, this transmutation was mirrored and symbolized - in the case of practical alchemy - by the changes which took place in the crucible, the alembic, or Philosopher's Egg.

* * *

⁶ Jung, op cit.

The Sufis believe that mankind is evolving towards a particular goal and that every individual is participating - whether he knows it or not - in this process. Idries Shah says: 'Mankind, according to the Sufis, is infinitely perfectable. The perfection comes about through attunement with the whole of existence. Physical and spiritual life meet, but only when there is a complete balance between them.'⁷

In another place, he says: 'The Sufi claim is that all the individuals who have performed certain functions are in a sense one.'⁸

The Sufi Master Jalaluddin Rumi, founder of the Order of Whirling Dervishes - he died in 1273 - believed that physical organs evolve through an evolutionary necessity. Shah speculates that at present there is an innate need for the human being to transcend time and space and therefore the necessary organs may already be developing.

'What ordinary people regard as sporadic and occasional bursts of telepathic or prophetic power,' he says, 'are seen by the Sufi as nothing less than the first stirrings of these same organs.'⁹

Shah is less specific, though intriguing, as to how these organs may be voluntarily developed or encouraged. They are developed, he says, by the Sufi way and it is only through experience that a person knows they are developing. The Sufi system has a series of stages, the attainment of each being accompanied by 'an unmistakable, if ineffable, experience.' It is this that awakens the developing organ which then permits relief from the actual climb and the generation of energy to go on. Each stage attained is not a transitory thing; it is permanent. Shah likens the process to photography: not until one of the stages has been attained is the 'photographic plate' fixed. The experience itself 'fixes' what has been exposed and developed.

He says this is the actual meaning of mystical experience, but that when this occurs haphazardly or without proper training - that is, 'in harmony with evolution' - the experience is merely transitory. Akin, perhaps, to the fleeting experience of temporary ecstasy, or even the euphoria of a hallucinogenic

⁷ & ⁸ Shah, op cit.

⁹ Ibid.

drug which eventually wears off.

The various exercises performed by Sufis are believed to create and intensify some force of attraction which draws to itself similar force from elsewhere. This is how, Shah says, Sufi teachers receive seemingly telepathic 'messages', asking them to respond to a deficiency of the 'force' in some other place, by helping to build it up again.

'This is as far as anything in Sufism can be explained in formal terms,' he says.

This is not deliberate mystification on the part of the Sufis, although they are essentially a secret movement. It seems that the concepts with which they are dealing are simply not capable of explanation in ordinary, rational terms. It may be also, of course, that Sufis choose to operate in this way because, so far as history shows, all public and externally organised attempts to improve and further mankind's spiritual development have been largely unsuccessful in the long term.

There have, of course, in addition, been periods in history when discretion was absolutely necessary. To counteract this, Shah says, Sufi literature has been carefully designed to appear orthodox or, through the use of allegory, utterly fanciful.

'In order to obscure the meanings of ritualistic factors ... they have handed down manuscripts from which the Sufic essence is to be distilled only by those who have the necessary equipment ... Only the respectably religious of the Sufi manuals are available outside Sufi circles.'¹⁰

Having grasped at least something of the Sufi aims, ideals and achievements, let us now look at the external evidence of their influence – in particular, in terms of alchemy.

For a moment, forget the 'pots and pans' of physical alchemy – the furnace, retorts, alembics and crucibles. Try to think of alchemy as having the same objectives as Sufism – individual striving towards the Perfected Man and the eventual transformation of mankind as a whole. To be appreciated in its proper and complete light, alchemy should be seen as a *total* science and art, functioning on numerous different levels. Much in the same way, for instance, that creative Art is not

totally confined or contained in pen and paper, the sculptor's chisel, the potter's wheel or the painter's oils and palette. Think for a moment what Art itself generates and disseminates throughout the world as an active force from all its countless schools, styles and disciplines. Poetry, ballet, theatre, opera, symphony – all are expressions of the human spirit that burst forth from the same creative volcano, affecting people in all walks of life and culture on countless different levels. Yet their entire effects are, to all extents and purposes, *invisible*.

The same can be said of genuine alchemy.

Sir Bernard Lovell and his team of astronomers at Jodrell Bank, recently aimed their 250-foot bowl radio telescope out into the universe – and picked up the last, flickering echo of the 'Big Bang' which is believed to have been the beginning of Creation. The faint radio signal they recorded gave them an estimate of the age of our universe of about 10,000 million years. They had discovered the tail-end of the actual cosmic detonation which is described in the first words of the Book of Genesis: 'In the beginning, God created heaven and earth.' Or, as St. John more metaphysically phrased it: 'In the beginning was the Word ...'

And yet this amazing discovery – perhaps the most important ever made, in Sir Bernard's opinion – has merely posed even more baffling questions.

'It has enabled us to give an answer to the great question of how the Universe began,' Sir Bernard said, in an interview with London's *Daily Mail*. 'The trouble is that the answer raises more problems than the question ...'

As Space Correspondent Angus McPherson explained: 'Man is perhaps a few million years old – the Universe about 10,000 million years. Yet in the first three minutes of creation, perhaps in the first second, it was already settled that Man, or something very like him, was almost bound to emerge.'

And Sir Bernard told him: 'The chances of this being coincidence are vanishingly remote. This is quite extraordinary and we do not understand the reason.'¹¹

¹¹ *Daily Mail*, London, Feb. 13, 1979: 'How they're eavesdropping on the Big Bang,' article by Angus McPherson, following publication of *In the Centre of Immensities*, by Sir Bernard Lovell, (Hutchinson, 1979.)

¹⁰ Ibid.

What, it may well be asked, has all this to do with alchemy? Everything.

In his Introduction to the English translation of Fulcanelli's first amazing book, *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*,¹² Walter Lang writes:

'The action of an Absolute in differentiating a prime-substance into a phenomenal universe is an operation in alchemy. The creation of galactic matter from energy and the creating of energy from matter is alchemy. *God is an alchemist.*'

He then adds, significantly:

'The decay of radium with the release of radioactivity is alchemy. *Nature is an alchemist.*

'The explosion of a nuclear bomb is alchemy. *The scientist is now an alchemist.*' (My italics.)

Unfortunately, the equation does not work itself out entirely. That is, it does not mean because he has succeeded in mounting a similar, small-scale operation to that of God, that man has become godlike. The key element - that of infusing spirituality and intelligence - has been omitted.

Alchemists, on the other hand, have attempted to embrace the total formula. Traditionally, they have always regarded the entire Cosmos (from the Greek *kosmos* - 'order') as the result of a gigantic alchemical operation by some Higher Power. They have always suspected what science is now beginning to confirm - that we are not a freak of nature, an accident of cosmic forces.

Statistically, as Sir Bernard implies, and as Walter Lang expresses it, 'evolution could not happen.' Yet it did. And as it did and we are here to prove it, the alchemists reasoned, it ought to be worthwhile and possible to try to discover how and why.

Accepting that we - and all other life-forms along with us - are the result, or indeed perhaps still part of, some universal laboratory experiment, it is only reasonable to

¹² Fulcanelli: Master Alchemist: *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1971.)

suppose that there is a slim possibility that some select few, super-intelligent individuals might be able to discover something of the nature of that experiment. It is even possible that certain men are actually chosen or permitted to gain such knowledge, for some ultra-mundane, as-yet undisclosed purpose.

This, at least according to Higher Occult tradition, is what happens to the successful Master Alchemist, the operative who attains the Philosopher's Stone and raises himself to Supreme Illumination - the level of the Adept.

Superficially, it may sound absurd. But on reflection it is infinitely less absurd than many of the philosophical and religious attempts to formulate an acceptable theory of cosmogenesis and anthropogenesis. It is no more incredible, in fact, than the idea of a laboratory monkey or a rat, gaining ascendancy over its fellows by learning more quickly how to obtain food by pressing the correct button. Such a specimen might even suspect that something is being done to it by external, unnatural factors - and escape.

To the alchemists, the many founders of various religious factions and schools of mundane philosophy were the would-be 'escapologists.' The alchemists considered these systems only imperfect approximations which were unsatisfactorily based and developed. Actual personal experience and experiment was essential - and not fanciful theorising. The true alchemist does not desire to 'escape', but to *know, understand, and participate.*

To quote Lang again:

'By extension, evolution and its present end-product, man, must have been contrived by forces outside the system (the biosphere) in which it occurred. Such an operation, involving the conscious manipulation of energy levels, may be taken as an operation in alchemy.

'Whether the "artist" who accomplished this great work was a single Intelligence or consortium of Intelligences seems immaterial: but the myths and classical traditions of demigods are in the highest degree suggestive.'

If man is, in reality, some part of the intermediate stages of an immense, cosmic experiment, it is possible that, through a deliberate mental process (Ritual magic?) or even through the

voluntary recall of inherited ancestral memory (Resurgent atavism?) he may gain insights into his own genesis - information which, genetically, he may already possess. If that is so - and the major Creation legends of many races would seem to bear this out - then the insights, revelations and visions of various individuals, mystics, contemplatives, seers and alchemists, take on much greater significance.

The alchemical assertion is that this has, in fact, been achieved. And, as in the case of Art, the actual works of a like-minded school of alchemists, or a chain of Initiates, functioning over a period of centuries, have and do disseminate fragmentary offshoots and indications of that work - practically *invisibly*.

What evidence do we have for this?

As I have shown, alchemy grew up in Egypt - and possibly at the same time in China. Yet before either of these two great cultures degenerated and debased themselves in various ways, the message had been implanted and the secret teachings of the art were carried abroad. Pockets of this carefully-guarded knowledge filtered out to Israel, Arabia, Persia, India and Greece. Like the Biblical tares, some of this knowledge fell on stony ground. Greece, for example, and later, Rome, did not appear to cultivate properly the seeds of alchemy which they inherited. As in the case of mathematics, Greece gave the false impression - one which stubbornly survives even today - that she was the original source of early scientific knowledge and philosophy. In fact, she merely nurtured and transmitted incomplete areas of knowledge which her scholars had picked up in the schools of Egypt.

The much purer form of Hermetic Science was preserved and developed by the Hebrew and Arabian scholars who were initiated in Egypt and was finally synthesized when these Masters came together in Saracen Spain. There, particularly around Seville, Granada, Toledo, Cordoba and other centres, the Jewish and Sufi masters set up a powerful 'underground' alchemical operation which sent waves all over Europe.

Like the invisibility of the total effect of Art on humanity, the whole influence of this enormous and prolonged school operation can never be fully appreciated.

Idries Shah says:

'The variety of teachers is enormous in Sufism, partly because they consider themselves to be part of an organic process. This means that their impact upon humanity may be taking place without any consciousness on the part of humanity of the relationship.'¹³

And Walter Lang observes:

'The nature of this noumenal structure can never be glimpsed and its foundations in a higher dimension cannot even be imagined. It externalized into the common life in a series of culture components which in aggregate constitute a large part of Western civilisation.'

It is, however, by an examination of some of these 'culture components', possible to get some inkling of the extent and scope of alchemical-Sufic influence over the centuries. We shall now look at some of them and try to put into perspective their significance as visible and apparently separate components which are in fact subtly integrated and complementary.

Chivalry and Heraldry

The first Islamic order of chivalry is said to have been founded in the early 7th century by Mohammed, to protect the great caravan routes - and, most of all, to protect the women and goods which travelled along them. In the same way, three centuries later, Hugh de Payen and Geoffrey of St. Omer founded the Knights Templar in 1118 to protect the pilgrim routes into Palestine and the Holy Land.

The Arabic word for chivalry is *akhdar*, which also means 'fine woman', and derives from the root KHDR. There are many other derivations from this root, including *Khidr*, the patron saint of the Sufi groups known as *halkas*, or circles of 13. *Khidr* is identical with St. George, who originated in Persia and was adopted sometime around 1350 as patron saint of the imitative chivalric Order of the Garter under King Edward III. In

¹³ Shah, op cit.

Arabic, the name for garter symbolises the mystical bond or link between the various *halkas*.

Chivalry and its symbolic system of identification, Heraldry, developed its own secret code or language, which today is still known only to members of the *halkas* and which, in fragmentary form, became debased in translation in Western heraldic language. It is significant, however, that the standard hooded woollen blue robe and the symbolic colours of blue and gold – emphasizing the link between body and spirit, earth and spiritual realms – were the same colours adopted by the later English Order of the Garter.

The name of the Sufi saint *Khidr* also means 'the Green One' – green being the Sufi traditional colour signifying initiation. It is worth recalling here that followers of the semi-legendary Robin Hood who, in some versions is seen as leader of a secret, chivalric or humanitarian vigilante group, in others as the head of a witch coven, were said to have adopted Lincoln green as the colour of their dress. The association of the Garter Order with witchcraft may also, as Idries Shah speculates, have arisen from an attempt to cover up an interrupted secret ritual (Dervish) dance. It will be recalled that the popular version of the Order's origin is that King Edward picked up a garter dropped during a dance by Joan, Countess of Salisbury and, in giving it back to her, raised the hem of his robe to show that he also wore one. He is supposed to have said, for the benefit of the rest of the guests – presumably because there were non-initiates present – 'Honi soit qui mal y pense.'

The slogan of the Sufi *halkas* remains a secret Arabic phrase containing reference to a 'cupbearer.' But Idries Shah points out that, phonetically, its Persian translation sounds almost identical to the medieval French motto of the Order of the Garter: Dishonoured be he who thinks evil of it. (See Fig. 3.)

The 'cupbearer' symbolism gives the clue to the connection of chivalry with the Arthurian Cycle of legends and the Quest Orders for the Grail, which was eventually Christianised as the Holy Grail. As the Perfected Man is the Sufi ideal, the means of attainment and the transmission of the secret methods involved are symbolised in the cup or grail being passed from one Initiate to another. Christ, as the Perfected Man therefore,



Fig. 3. The Mystic Rose emblem in the Chancellor
Badge of the Order of the Garter
(-after Ashmole).

was the object of the Grail Quest, the symbolic vessel said to have been used at the Last Supper and to have caught the blood of Christ on the Cross being used simply as an ideogram of the transmission process. Joseph of Arimathea, who took charge of Christ's body after the Crucifixion, is said to have brought the chalice to England, where it became hidden somewhere at Glastonbury. The search of the Knights of King Arthur's Round Table was, in fact, a symbolic Quest designed to imitate Christ's example - and become the Perfect Man. In the legends, only he who could ask the correct questions was allowed true access to and understanding of the Grail. This is, in fact, simply a reflection of the Question and Answer techniques used in some forms of Sufi teaching.

The elevation of woman which originated in the protective role of chivalry instituted by Mohammed developed into an idealisation of Woman as a Mystery Figure - the secret and hidden spirit of Nature. This found expression in the love poetry of the Troubadors - the wandering minstrels and storytellers who flourished in the South of France and Italy between the 11th and 14th centuries, where they had spread from Saracen Spain.

The Troubadors, Courtly Romances and Minnesingers

Troubadour derives from the Arabic root TRB which denotes, among other things, a lute-player, the lute and viol being the traditional instruments of the wandering minstrel. But it also signifies a 'seeker after that which is hidden' - from *trouver*, to seek or find, and *trouvere*, a discoverer or inventor. Like the Knights of the Grail, the Troubadors were on a mystical quest for self-illumination.

This search was veiled behind the idealisation of Woman, which was expressed in the Courtly Romances and Knight Errant themes of medieval Europe, and by writers like Jean de Meung (*Roman de la Rose*) and Dante (*The New Life* and *The Divine Comedy*). These were allegorisations of the Sufi ideal. As Dante expressed it in the *Convivio*, the mysterious woman these artists sought after and poured their poetic praise upon, was none other than 'the Lady Philosophy, daughter of the

Emperor of the Universe.' In short, she was a personification of the Way of Self-Knowledge and Purification - a theme which Dante expanded to its ultimate expression in *The Divine Comedy*.

At length - like most concepts which they did not fully understand, or whose widespread and powerful influence they coveted - the Church fathers adopted this theme and transformed it into a Cult of the Virgin Mary.

In *The Legacy of Islam*, an anthology edited by Alfred Guillaume, the writer J. B. Trend says:

'One aspect of love poetry arising in Saracen Spain, that of the elevation of womankind, was rapidly diverted by the Church, as has been noted by historians, into the idealization of the Virgin Mary.'¹⁴

And Professor P. K. Hitti, in his *History of the Arabs*, says:

'The subject - the praise of the Virgin Mary - is a logical development of the troubadour's idealization of the lady of the manor; while the poems of the troubadours are, in matter, form and style, closely connected with Arabic idealism and Arabic poetry written in Spain.'¹⁵

The Black Virgin

The true origin of the unnamed lady of the Troubadour songs and Courtly Romances is indicated by the so-called Black Virgin statues which have been discovered in many European churches and cathedrals of the Middle Ages. As we shall see later, Fulcanelli not only draws attention to this figure, but understands her true, esoteric significance. As already noted, a confusion between the Arabic words for black (*fecham*) and wise (*facham*) resulted in these statues of the Wise Virgin being coloured black. But she was certainly not the Virgin of the later Christian dogma, the Mother of Christ. She was much, much older.

¹⁴ Oxford, 1931.

¹⁵ London, 1946.



Fig. 4. Jacques de Molay, last Grand Master of the Knights Templar, burned at the stake, March 18-19, 1314.

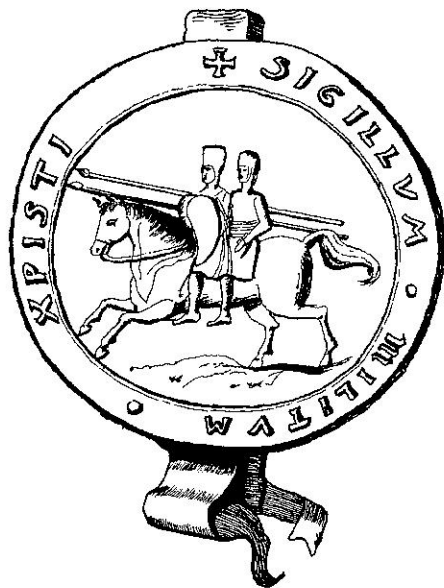


Fig. 5. Seal of the Knights Templar.

Manly P. Hall, who has devoted a lifetime to the study of ancient mysteries of initiation, states: 'Only the initiates, however, knew that this lady was the Isis of Sais, the Sophia of the Gnosis, and the Diana of the Ephesians.'¹⁶

While Hall does not appear to notice the Sufi influence of the Troubadors and associated movements, he does note that in France, the Troubadors were under the protection of the like-minded Albigenses. This dualist sect, like the Knights Templar and the Cathars, were annihilated by the Christian leaders for alleged heresy. (See Figs. 4 & 5). (In fact, they simply refused to accept the dogma of the corrupt Church and preferred to adhere to older, more traditional ideals.) The Troubador motif, however, survived through the Minnesingers and later the Meistersingers of Germany, having been carried there from Provence, one of the last outposts of the Troubadors and Albigenses.

The name *Minnesange*, from *minne*, meaning love, was the term given to a song or poem written by a knight to affirm his love and devotion to the Unknown Mistress. The later Meistersingers, burgher musicians of Germany, are believed to have originated with twelve Guild poets who were inspired by the Troubadors and Minnesingers. The Order's spiritual affiliation with the ancient mysteries is indicated in the number of 12, which was often the required number of an inner sanctum: the 12 Olympians, 12 Patriarchs, 12 disciples, etc. The symbolic or physical leadership of such groups made up the number 13 reflected in Christ and his disciples, the Order of the Garter, witch covens and other derivatives.

Freemasonry

Modern Freemasonry is a speculative system which derived from the medieval Craft Guilds, who protected the secrets of their work in symbolic, sacred architecture, by a code of passwords, signs, grips and rituals. These operative masons, as they are known, enshrined much of their lore in the geomantic

¹⁶ *Orders of the Quest: The Holy Grail*, (Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, Calif., 1949.)

proportion and alchemical symbolism of gothic architecture.

There is evidence within the similarity of structure and the use of certain words and symbols of Freemasonry that, via the Craft Guilds, it had its true roots in the Sufi Order known as the Builders, founded by Dhu'l-Nun in the 10th century.

Freemasonic tradition claims a lineage dating back to the building of Solomon's Temple and, possibly, even beyond, to ancient Egypt. In the sense that Dhu'l-Nun is reputed to have been instrumental in the transmission of Sufi lore - including alchemy and secret geometrical principles - from Egypt, this is partly true.

It is not possible here to go into too much detail of significant parallels between Sufic and Masonic material. Much of it is still in use and is considered valuable and esoteric in the initiatory workings of both. However, as Idries Shah has given some hints, they may be summarised.

There are, including the Grant Mastership of all England, 33 degrees in Freemasonry. In Arabic numerology, the consonantal framework of the name of the Prophet Mohammed - rendered as MHMMMD - also gives 33, thus:

$$\begin{array}{ccccccccc} M & H & M & M & D & & & & \\ 40 & + & 8 & + & 40 & + & 40 & + & 4 & = & 132(32 + 1 = 33) \end{array}$$

Furthermore, Robert Graves states quite categorically that Freemasonry 'began as a Sufi society. It first reached England in the reign of King Athelstan (924 - 939) and was introduced into Scotland disguised as a craft guild at the beginning of the fourteenth century, doubtless by the Knights Templar.'

He adds: 'Its reformation in early eighteenth-century London, by a group of Protestant sages who mistook its Saracen terms for Hebrew, has obscured many of its early traditions.'¹⁷

In a footnote, Graves points out: 'That the successive degrees mark the actual passing through certain definite spiritual experiences, allegorized by their rituals, is less understood.'

He goes on to concur with Idries Shah that the three outward symbols of the Masonic Craft originally represented three postures of prayer. These, says Shah, were denoted by

three Arabic letters, whose shapes have suggested the resultant Masonic symbols: *alif*, the kneeling position (the square); *ba*, prostration (the level), and *lam*, the 'rope which binds all in union,' which is shaped like a curling length of rope.

The system of Freemasonry - in its original Sufic form - represented the rebuilding of the higher, spiritual individual from his imperfect state. This was symbolized in the tradition of the re-building of the Temple at Jerusalem - but not, according to the Sufis, the Temple of Solomon.

Robert Graves says:

"Buiz" or "Boaz" and "Solomon, Son of David," who are honoured by Freemasons as builders at King Solomon's Temple at Jerusalem, were not Solomon's Israelite subjects or Phoenician allies as supposed, but Abdel-Malik's Sufi architects who built the Dome of the Rock on the ruins of Solomon's Temple, and their predecessors. Their real names included Thuban abdel Faiz ("Izz") and his "great grandson" Maaruf, the son (disciple) of David of Tay, whose Sufic code name was Solomon, because he was the "son of David." The architectural measurements chosen for this Temple, as for the Kaaba building at Mecca, were numerical equivalents of certain Arabic roots conveying holy messages, every part of the building being related to every other in definite proportion.'¹⁸

The Kaaba, or cubical Temple of Mecca, says Shah, was rebuilt in AD 608, with 31 courses of stone and wood. The Sufis add: 'with Earth and Sky, thirty-three,' - again, the number of degrees in English Masonry and the numerical value of MoHaMMeD. About 691, he adds, the Saracens rebuilt the Temple of Solomon on the site known as the Dome of the Rock. 'This, and no earlier one, is the Temple whose servants were the Knights Templar, accused of Saracenic leanings. It is no accident that after the dissolution of the Order of the Templars, the Freemasons took on Templar traditions.'¹⁹

Finally, once again the 'black' cubic stone of the Dome of the Rock - believed by many to be of heavenly, or meteoric

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Shah, op cit.

¹⁷ Introduction, Idries Shah's *The Sufis*.

origin - takes on another suggestive meaning in Arabic: the *hajarel fehmi*, or 'stone of the wise' - the name given by alchemists for the Philosopher's Stone - and indicating that the Great Secret can only be attained with divine aid, from above.

Other Components

There are so many Qabalistic and Sufi-influenced areas of learning which filtered out of Saracen Spain in the Middle Ages that it would be impossible to go into them all in detail in a work of this kind. But among them, we might also note the following:

The theosophical philosophy of Albertus Magnus and his pupil, St. Thomas Aquinas (about whom, more later);

The cosmology of Roger Bacon;

The devotional systems of St. Francis of Assisi, St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Aquila;

The immunological, chemical and homoeopathic medicine of Paracelsus;

The precursory cybernetics of Raymond Lully.

More immediately obvious influence, via the 'open university' of Spain, can be seen in the emergence of specialised dancing, such as Moorish, or 'Morris' dancing, inspired by the ritual movements and exercises of the Dervish Orders, yet without retaining their techniques of self-induced ecstatic states. Similarly, the inner Messages of Mystery Plays, conveyed by medieval Wandering Players and Harlequinades, have their roots in Sufi teaching and practice.

Harlequin

The solitary, wandering Sufi teacher - and, remember, he could be Jewish, Christian or even Buddhist, as the Sufis accept the essence of all religions - often wore a patchwork robe and carried a staff. He made paradoxical statements which, superficially, might have seemed mere buffoonery and clowning to the non-initiate. But they were, in fact, designed to trigger alternative thought-processes and frames of reference,

rather like the seemingly illogical *koans* of Zen Buddhism.

The patchwork robe, carefully stitched, and the wooden staff, eventually evolved into the quartered, colourful costume and the bladder-stick of the Harlequin and Jester. The name Harlequin itself derives from an Arabic play on words, signifying 'great door' and 'confused speech.' It is *aglaq*, plural *aghlaqin* and pronounced 'arlakeen.' The Arabic for 'patch' also stems from a root which has the alternate renderings of 'fool' *arqu'a*, 'nonsensical', *raqua* and chessboard, *rua'at*. This latter application is highly significant in its link between the chequerboard design of the floors of some Dervish meeting-places and that of the Masonic temple.

The actual significance of Harlequin's role as a teacher in mime can be seen in his survival in Christmas Mummers' plays still enacted today. In many of these he has become the Fool or Medicine man who usually has a group of assistants with black ('wise') faces. They represent a secret society of which he is the head. The plays usually take the form of the symbolic death of the Fool, so that the community can survive the winter 'death' of the Sun. His assistants, or sons, generally slay him ritually. He descends to the underworld, taking with him the evils of the previous twelve months, only to return, reborn and renewed. The analogy with the alchemical process is obvious.

Archery, falconry and the secret symbols of Spanish Gardens with their mazes, were yet further spinoffs of the secret teachings of the Spanish schools: all externalized aspects of a great operation carried on invisibly. Only one aspect of this operation - chemical alchemy - used the terminology which has been popularly identified with the subject.

Embroidery, illuminated manuscripts and gothic architecture were yet other means of conveying the teachings in encoded form. In his photographic study of Gothic art, *Rose Windows*, Painton Cowen says:

'Henry Adams and Abbé Bulteau estimate that some 80 cathedrals and 500 churches of near cathedral size were started in France alone in the period 1170-1270; and many of these were almost finished within that period. It was an activity that is estimated to have taken up at least one third

of what would now be called the Gross Domestic Product. It is a phenomenon that has never really been explained ...'

Elsewhere, he quotes Auguste Rodin: 'If we could but understand Gothic art, we should be irresistibly led back to truth.'²⁰

As we shall see later, Fulcanelli 'understood' Gothic art in terms of the Great Work of alchemy, and clearly had some profound grasp of these externalised components of the secret tradition.

One of the more obvious reasons for secrecy imposed upon those who were permitted to benefit from these many-faceted founts of wisdom, can be seen in the fate of the Albigenses, Cathars and Knights Templar – all virtually wiped out by fanatical 'Christian' majority groups. Their dogmatic interpretations of a wrathful God and the promise of hell fire and damnation to non-believers served to keep the common people in line through fear. The discerning and enlightened, however, were forced to follow their own, purer doctrines in secret.

To escape the persecution, brought on by their refusal to accept the hierarchical machinery of the Church, it is believed that many of the higher initiates among the Albigenses scattered themselves secretly throughout Europe. These men, known as the Perfected Ones, are said to have re-established themselves in the European early centres of paper-manufacture – an art brought from the Near East by the Moors and the returning Crusaders. The printers themselves, members of secret Craft Guilds, were thus able to help the continued spread of secret, encoded and symbolic teaching. Only such secretive collaboration – with printers, binders, engravers and typesetters – can explain the continued dissemination of esoteric works under the noses of the fanatical Church hierarchy. These books and documents, many printed anonymously or pseudonymously, could be recognised only by initiates, through illuminated symbolism, cryptograms, typographical anagrams and water-marks.

Many medieval alchemists, also, were persecuted on the

vague, all-embracing grounds of heresy – despite the fact that their texts are littered with devout appeals to the Almighty to aid them in the success of their operations. Yet others were imprisoned by various despots and aristocrats, who hoped to learn their secrets for selfish, financial gain.

It is easy to imagine the reaction of today's international money-speculators and gold-manipulators if it were to be revealed that alchemy did work and that it was actually possible to achieve the physical transmutation of practical alchemy. Once the Philosopher's Stone is attained, the alchemists claim, it is possible to multiply it indefinitely and with it to produce unlimited supplies of gold. The effect of such a successful operation, subjected to abuse, on the world gold markets, would have unimaginably far-reaching consequences.

Thus even today, the practising alchemist who wrote *In Pursuit of Gold* is perhaps wise to remain hidden behind the nom-de-plume of Lapidus.²¹

From time to time in the history of alchemy there emerge curious events which suggest mysterious and disturbing possibilities. One such may have been the sudden recall and burning, on the lawn of Bury House, Gosport, Hampshire, in 1850, of almost the entire edition of Mary Anne Atwood's *A Suggestive Inquiry into the Hermetic Mystery*.²² Whatever lay behind this strange action, it was never fully and satisfactorily explained.

Another similarly mysterious case happened as recently as 1919 – a period when Fulcanelli was still labouring to perfect the Stone and before publication of his own two works.

Mme. Irene Hillel-Erlanger, daughter of the famous French banker of that name, financed the publication of an anonymous novel, called *Voyage en kaléidoscope*. Superficially, it appeared to be only a loosely-plotted romance, but in reality it was an alchemical treatise in disguise.

According to informed occultist sources in Paris, the book contained some of the most carefully-guarded secrets of the alchemical art, such as the name of the *prima materia*, or first

²⁰ *Rose Windows*, (Thames & Hudson, 1979.) The quotation by Rodin is from *The Cathedrals of France*, E. C. Geissbuhler, London, 1966.

²¹ Lapidus: *In Pursuit of Gold*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1976.)

²² Originally published anonymously by Trelawney Saunders, London, 1850; re-published by William Tait, Belfast, 1918.

matter, without which the process can never be started, and actual details of the meticulous heating procedure to be applied in what is known as the 'moist' or 'wet' method. I am told that this information was concealed – yet on display for the discerning – in the esoteric symbolism of the book's cover-design, and in the actual phraseology of certain parts of the text itself.

On the eve of publication, the anonymous author gathered around him a few of his closest acquaintances for a celebratory soiree. Next day, he contracted a sudden fever and died. It was later assumed that he had eaten oysters that were tainted or which had been deliberately infected. The following week practically every copy of the book was bought up and pulped by a person or persons unknown. The book had not even been officially registered in the catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale and, as far as I can determine, only two copies survived, both in the private collections of contemporary occultists.

Strangely enough, one of these two copies had been dedicated by its financial backer, Irene Hillel-Erlanger, to a chemist of Rhone-Poulenc, who was also a student of alchemy. Her name was Louise Barbe and she apparently produced in her laboratory what she believed to be a drinkable gold elixir (whether from the encoded instructions of *Voyage en Kaléidoscope* or not, I have been unable to discover). She took the coction – and died.

While the death of Louise Barbe was attributed to self-administered poisoning and that of the unnamed alchemist-author to accidental poisoning from tainted oysters, the alternative implications are clear and were voiced at the time of these events. Despite the official attitude, it was rumoured that a financial trust or a group of international gold-dealers – afraid of the effects of such alchemical knowledge on the bullion markets – had the book seized and suppressed.

Gold-making aside, however, – which is, in fact, merely a test to see if the Philosopher's Stone has been perfected – the successful alchemist would also be in a very vulnerable position if large business combines were to covet his tinctures or elixirs. One has merely to consider the contemporary public obsession with longevity, which is in effect a striving for eternal youth, to realise the implications. Cryogenics, reincarnation cults, naturopathy, homoeopathy, Hatha Yoga, hormone treatment, even jogging and keep-fit classes, all serve to

emphasize a conscious yearning for the Elixir of Life. The medieval monarchs who imprisoned and tortured alchemists have now been replaced by powerful chemical-industrial cosmetic and therapeutic concerns.

But what is perhaps most reassuring about alchemy, in its properly appreciated sense, is that it has a built-in protective mechanism. This operates even on the most elementary level. Try, for example, seriously expounding some of the foregoing ideas to your more materialist friends and you will undoubtedly be laughed at.

But who is really entitled to laugh? The health-food addict, the hunter of beauty and massage-parlours, the obsessive weight-lifter, the neurotic dieter, the hair-transplant recipient? Or the man who simply *knows* – the alchemist?

Before the concept of alchemy as a practical reality can be dismissed out of hand as some kind of mystical, pseudo-scientific Dodo, the question has to be considered: Why should thousands of men – and some women – many acknowledged as brilliant figures in many other ways, devote their lives to a chimerical and dangerous system with an unattainable goal?

Here is how Walter Lang sums up alchemy's built-in defence system:

'Throughout the whole European record of alchemy, its genuine practitioners appear to have been under certain obligations which may in fact apply to "artists" in the Work of every Age. It seems that they are required to leave behind them some thread which those who come after may use as a guideline across the web of Ariadne. The indications provided must be in code and *the code must be self-cancelling*; that is, an inquirer who does not possess the first secret must be infallibly prevented from discovering the second. "Unto him that hath ..." is nowhere better exemplified than in the attempt to study the alchemical texts.

'Given that the inquirer knows the first secret, search and unceasing labour may wrest from the code the next step following, but the searcher will need to have made progress *in his own personal practice* before he is able to unravel a further step. Thus the secret protects itself.'²³

²³ Introduction to *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*.

III

Initiation & The Initiates

The great events of our world as planned and executed by man do not breathe the spirit of Christianity, but rather of unadorned paganism.

- C. J. Jung: *Psychology & Alchemy*.

There is, in our chemistry, a certain noble substance which moves from lord to lord.

- Michael Maier: *Symbola Aureae Mensae*.

ONE QUESTION that is bound to arise in the mind of the reader who is unfamiliar with the concept of ancient schools of wisdom and chains of transmission is: What is initiation? Before we look at the lives and achievements of the key figures in this process, therefore, let us try to understand the nature of so-called initiation.

The philosopher-priests of ancient, bygone civilisations, such as those of Chaldea and Egypt, considered man as belonging to the harmony which they saw in the world, in Nature and in the great Universe around them. In order to attempt to understand the moving spirit of that harmony they worked out elaborate and often complex systems which in expression involved personifying - or even, to the profane, deifying - the various elements and workings of Nature, the Universe and, ultimately, of Man. Thus the Sun, the great, life-giving orb which was born, rose to glory, died and was reborn in a never-ending daily cycle, was seen as a major spiritual principle, reflection or aspect of God, the Unknowable Lord of the Cosmos. Similarly, the Moon and planets came to be seen as other manifestations of this same ineffable

source - manifestations of the supreme deity. The ancient Magi or wise men realized that man, too, was a lesser principle or emanated particle of the entire rhythm of the universe, from which he could not escape. Yet, it was thought, though he might not be able to escape, he surely could raise himself to unite with a higher level or principle of participation in the cosmic cycle and, through it, ultimately identify himself more closely with the godhead. Each man contained within himself a miniature reflection or microcosm, of all creation - and therefore, something of the essence of the creator. If that essence could be pinpointed, refined and concentrated, the ancient priests reasoned, then man could elevate himself spiritually - feel closer to the deity, of whom he represented an infinitesimal part, and from whom he had originally emanated.

With the advent of organised religion, in particular Christianity and the subsequent distortions of the original teachings of Jesus, a determined campaign was launched to destroy this spiritual philosophy-science - an attempt which outwardly succeeded. To some extent the action of the Church was justified, because much of the secret teachings of the Magi had become debased in the popular understanding. The Sun, Moon and planets and the forces of Nature, for example, had come to be thought of literally as gods, rather than symbols of the spiritual, visible aspects of God's presence. Astrology - a major science in pre-dynastic Egypt and Babylonia - declined almost to the level of common fortune-telling.

While the Christians superimposed their own festivals and saints days arbitrarily on those of the so-called pagans, surviving cells of the esoteric priesthood retired into seclusion and sought to preserve the original teachings secretly. As the astronomical festivals of the year were glossed over by Christian celebrations and feasts, this inner core of Magi continued to observe their original, natural significance; a precise, mathematical cosmic cycle which, both physiologically and spiritually, was seen mirrored in the biological rhythms and mental processes of human life itself. The four major stations of the Sun - sunrise, midday, sunset and midnight - continued to be set aside for clandestine prayer, salutation and meditation. Similarly, as the Christians observed Easter, Pentecost, and Christmas, the naturalist 'pagans' secretly acknowledged the

progressions of the seasons and the birth, death and rebirth of their solar-god principle, at the Equinoxes, Solstices, Yule, May Day Eve, Lammas and Beltane.

It was into such mysteries - of which the above represents merely a framework summary - that those who outwardly embraced Christianity, yet sought deeper, more meaningful spiritual insight, were initiated by the surviving custodians of the ancient mystery schools' wisdom.

The dynamic concept of the universe and its inseparable relationship with man was at the core of all the ancient Mysteries and cults: the Rites of Eleusis, the Bacchic and Dionysian Festivals, the Mithraic mythos, the Mysteries of Isis-Osiris-Horus, and the solar-fire based religions of the ancient Hindus and Zoroastrians. In the Orient, similar systems evolved under the mantle of Taoism and Tantricism, with the concept of cyclic rhythms expressed in the principles of Yin and Yang, the *lung-mei* or 'dragon-paths' which were symbolic of terrestrial energy-lines, crisscrossing the earth and mysteriously influenced by the major bodies of the solar system. In man, they were reflected in the median lines of acupuncture, or in the *chakras*, the subtle energy-centres which, in Shakti and Kundalini Yoga, correspond loosely to the endocrine glands.

These Mystery Cults spread and were preserved at the heart of the great Nordic sagas and legends, in the ancient Celtic beliefs and in the rites of the Druids. Such concepts found expression in the astronomical and geomantic principles of landscaping and building, from the solar and lunar megalithic temples of Ancient Britain to the sublime form, dimension and proportion which were later secretly applied to Christian monumental and gothic architecture and known as sacred geometry. Within this latter, as we shall see later, were enshrined secrets of the alchemical science, cunningly disguised ambiguously as Christian and Old Testament symbolism. In the same way, esoteric interpretation of the Hebrew Talmud, Torah and Zohar - in the system known as Qabalah - yielded other forms of the ancient teachings: in symbolic representations of the emanations of the Unknowable Infinite (Ain Sof) as the Sephiroth of the Tree of Life.

Thus, the Initiates were custodians and teachers of a vast

body of knowledge - mundane, spiritual and celestial - which in its embryonic form pre-dated all of the world's major religious systems. Within this corpus of knowledge, the Initiate could study and attempt to raise himself spiritually and even, if he so desired, physically. He could rise onto other planes of experience or, if you prefer, levels of consciousness, to gain deep and profound understanding of the nature of man and his relationship to God and the Universe. He could attempt to identify and isolate the very 'life-spirit' itself in all organic matter and, if successful, set out to synthesize and concentrate it, aided as he believed by God and Nature. This was the path taken in the Quest for the Philosopher's Stone.

To the outsider, these practices, studies, self-disciplines and meditations became looked upon as magical arts: alchemy, divination, scrying, geomancy, clairvoyance, consorting with spirits, necromancy, prophecy and witchcraft. As this popular view of esoteric work grew, it strengthened the necessity for veiled allegory and secrecy. Some of its practitioners, therefore, either worked alone and in isolation, or together in the guise of a Christianised interpretation of their objects and attainments - as in the cases of St. Francis of Assisi, St. Thomas Aquinas, St. James of Compostella and other Christian Fathers who worked secretly behind the respectable cloak of a Brotherhood or Monastery. Occasionally, indications of the actual inner workings of such mystics leaked into the public domain - and resulted in the branding of many scholars, like Roger Bacon, Cornelius Agrippa and Albertus Magnus, with the taint of diabolism, sorcery and the Black ('Wise') Arts. As already indicated, these secret activities reached their peak in the Sufi and Qabalah influenced schools of Saracen Spain, and from there spread to the rest of Europe over a period of four or five centuries.

Let us now examine some of the key figures in this preservation and transmission process, initiated by the Sufi masters and Qabalistic teachers who had brought the alchemical art from Egypt. Although it is not possible to prove unequivocally that each of these adepts was part of a carefully-organised and maintained programme, it will where possible be shown that each had direct or indirect contact with the major schools and masters of Spain. It is the contention of this section

of my book that this process – somewhat akin to that of torchbearers in a relay – resulted ultimately in the appearance in contemporary times of men like Fulcanelli, who carry on the tradition of the Hermetic Art almost as if under some holy obligation.

The modern Western transmission seems to have begun with Michael Scot, born between 1175 and 1180 and believed to be a descendant of the family of Balwearie, in Fife, Scotland.

Scot was educated at Roxburgh grammar school, the Cathedral School of Durham and at Oxford. He joined a Cistercian Order and gained a doctorate in theology in Paris. Between 1200 and 1213, he travelled to Sicily, to take up an appointment as personal tutor to the then Prince Frederick, later Frederick II. Sicily was at that time still an outpost of the Islamic Empire and Scot quickly taught himself Arabic. He read the works of scholars like Rhazes and Averroës and in 1209, on the marriage of 14-year-old Frederick to Constance, daughter of the King of Aragon, who was 24 and already widow of the King of Hungary, wrote his *Physiologia* as a wedding-present. In his study of Scot, the Rev. J. Wood Brown notes the influence of Rhazes in this work, which deals with generation and birth, anatomy and physiognomy.¹

On the accession of the young King Frederick, Scot became Court Astrologer. He studied the alchemical texts of Arab writers and produced two works on the subject, *Liber Luminis Luminem* and *De Alchemie*.² Both Scot and his student-King were passionately interested in the nature of life and often experimented with living plants and animals, an occupation which, no doubt, enhanced Scot's later reputation as a magician. In the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, his namesake, Sir Walter Scott, refers to him as the 'wizard of Balwearie' and in his *Divine Comedy* (*Inferno*, Canto XX, lines 115-117) Dante mentions him:

¹ *An Enquiry into the Life and Legend of Michael Scot*, (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1897).

² As confirmation of Scot's actual practical work in alchemy, a recipe from this work is reproduced in Appendix I.

That other there, who looks so lean and small
In the flanks, was Michael Scott, who verily
Knew every trick of the art magical.³

On the outbreak of plague in Sicily, King Frederick and his retinue left court for Cefalu, en route to Messina and Catania, while Scot sailed for Spain, where he joined the Toledo school of esoteric studies around 1210. This was a remnant of the great Jewish school of Cordoba of the 10th century, whose savants, on the expulsion of the Jews by Abd-el-Mumen some time before 1150, and the burning of the Caliph Hakim's great library of 400,000 volumes, transferred themselves to Toledo. It is almost certain that, while there, Scot made a pilgrimage to the shrine of Averroës at Cordoba.

King Frederick and Scot, his friend and tutor, returned to Sicily around 1220. Like the great Paracelsus after him, Scot (and King Frederick) took a great interest in medicine and curative processes. An anonymous MS⁴ says he excelled in the treatment of leprosy, gout and dropsy and he wrote two medical texts, *De Urinis* and *Pillulae Magistri Michaelis Scoti*.

The facts of Scot's life developed outwardly into a web of legends which, taken literally, seem utterly fantastic. Examined more closely, however, they seem to point to the possibility of Sufi influence.

One, in particular, seems to be either an allusion to the alleged Sufi ability to transcend time – or to hypnotic abilities of a very advanced order.

It is said to have taken place in Palermo on November 22, 1220, at a banquet, when King Frederick was celebrating the anniversary of his coronation. Pages were still going around the tables with ewers and bowls of perfumed water and embroidered hand-towels when Scot and a companion appeared, both dressed in Eastern robes. The weather was oppressively warm and King Frederick asked Scot to cause a rain-shower to cool off the temperature. Scot is alleged to have raised a storm and downpour, which then dispersed as quickly as it had arrived. When Frederick asked Scot what favour he desired, the

³ Trans. Dorothy L. Sayers, (Penguin Books, 1949.)

⁴ Sibbald Collections, Advocates' Library, Edinburgh.

astrologer-magician asked if he could choose one of the company as his champion against some enemies. He chose a German baron named Ulfo. As it seemed to Ulfo, they set off immediately in two galleys and with an army of men. They sailed out of the Mediterranean westwards into uncharted regions until they made landfall and were welcomed by a strange people. They joined the local army with Ulfo in supreme command. After a successful siege in which Ulfo killed an enemy king, he married the vanquished regent's beautiful daughter and took over the throne. Scot and his eastern-costumed companion, meanwhile, went off to seek other adventures. Ulfo and his wife lived happily for twenty years, raising a family until one day Scot and his companion returned and asked him if he would like to revisit his home. Ulfo agreed – and suddenly found himself back in the banquet hall, just as it had been before he left. The pages were still moving around with the hand-bowls. Scot and his mysterious companion left but Ulfo, apparently, spent the rest of his life bemoaning the loss of his wife of twenty years and their family.

The story has something of the elements of a fabulous tale from the Arabian Nights. But it has some odd parallels with similar stories of the powers of Sufis to derange others' concepts of time and reality. Idries Shah tells a remarkably similar tale in *Oriental Magic*. In it, the Sultan of Egypt is persuaded to put his head into a barrel of water, as the rest of his courtiers look on. He immediately finds himself shipwrecked on the shore of a strange land. Determined to avenge himself upon Sheikh Shahab-el-Din, the magician who has landed him in this situation, the Sultan is taken into the nearest town by the locals who find him and he works as a slave. After several years he is granted his freedom, marries and starts a business. Then one day while walking by the sea he decides to go for a swim. At the instant he dives in, he finds himself once more back in his Cairo palace, surrounded by his courtiers.

Although the experience had seemed like years, it occurred in the space of only a few seconds.

It is interesting to note that both stories contain references to vessels containing water. Could it be that, by focusing the subject's attention on the reflective surface, the magicians induced an instantaneous trance and talked the two men

through their experiences? This would seem to be the only explanation which offers itself.

At any rate, it is almost certain that Michael Scot came under Sufi influence during his days in Spain and Sicily.

Indirectly, Dante's own reference to him is confirmation of this. Dante himself has been shown to display definite Sufi influence. He deliberately taught himself the language of Provence, with its Spanish-Saracen derived suitability for writing illuminist works and Courtly Romances. Dante was also a one-time member of the Florentine Guild of Physicians and Apothecaries and, in 1304, entered upon a 20-year period of self-imposed wandering and exile, in the manner of the wandering Dervish. It was his interest in the 'vulgar tongue' – later known as the 'langue verte', or green language of France – which decided him not to write his masterpiece *The Divine Comedy* in Latin. (Green, it will be remembered, is the Sufi colour of initiation.)

Another indication of Scot's apparent hypnotic prowess is given by an anonymous Florentine in a commentary on Dante's *Divine Comedy*. According to this writer, Scot was once asked by some house guests to demonstrate one of his marvels. It was January and yet, he made grapes appear on the table. He told his guests to select a bunch apiece, but not to put out their hands until he gave the signal. On the word 'cut', the grapes disappeared and the would-be diners found themselves each grasping the sleeve of their immediate neighbours.

Albertus Magnus, about whom we learn more later, was also said to have performed similar marvels to those of Scot – holding a dinner party in a snow-laden garden in midwinter which, when his guests sat down, turned into a bright, flowery, sunny scene.

Whatever method Scot may have used to induce the reality of his marvels in onlookers, it is certain that he was familiar with the use of bowls of water to focus the attention in divinatory operations. He refers to this technique in one of his works and says that it is best done by using a child of five or seven as a 'screyer' – as the noted Elizabethan Dr. John Dee used Edward Kelly – and by observance of astrological factors, incantations and the invocation of spirits.

His familiarity with Qabalistic philosophy of macrocosm

reflected in microcosm is apparent in his *Introduction to Astrology*, in which he outlines a long list of correspondences in nature, the stars, man, musical octaves, eight parts of speech in grammar, eight beatitudes in theology and numerous other applications. In one work, he even employs the Qabalistic device of *notarikon* to produce an acrostic in which the initial letters of eight sins spell out their total nature: DIABOLUS:

Desperatio; Invidia; Avaritia; Blasphemia; Odium; Luxuria; Ventris ingluvies; Superbia.

Of alchemy, Scot says: 'Alchemy as it were transcends the heavens in that it strives by the virtue of spirits to transmute common metals into gold or silver and from them to make a water of much diversity.'

In recognition of his scholastic work, in 1224 Scot was offered the archbishopric of Clonmel, in Tipperary, Eire, but turned it down because he could not speak Erse and therefore did not believe he could communicate with the local people satisfactorily - a remarkable sign of pious restraint in a time when ecclesiastical sinecures were a common abuse.

When and where Scot died is uncertain. A legend says that he predicted his own death, a coping stone falling from the bell-tower of a chapel onto his head and killing him instantly. However, he is believed to have died between 1230 and 1235 and to be buried at Melrose Abbey.

* * *

Little is known of Artephius - an adept whom the modern alchemists Eugene Canseliet and Lapidus esteem highly - except that he was a Jewish Hermetic philosopher who died in the 12th century.⁵ The internal evidence of his surviving work, however, demonstrates a working knowledge of alchemy. His classic work, *De Vita Propaganda* (On the Prolonging of Life) was written, he claimed, after he had lived for at least 1,000 years - by virtue of the Elixir of Life. The relevant passage reads:

⁵ Lynn Thorndike, in *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Vol. II, (The Macmillan Company, New York, 1923), says Artephius 'seems to have been the same as Altughra'i, a poet and alchemist who died in 1128.'

'I, Artephius, having learnt all the art in the book of Hermes, was once as others, envious, but having now lived one thousand years or thereabouts (which thousand years have already passed over me since my nativity, by the grace of God alone, and the use of this admirable quintessence), as I have seen, through this long space of time, that men have been unable to perfect the same magistry on account of the obscurity of the words of the philosophers, moved by pity and good conscience, I have resolved, in these my last days, to publish in all sincerity and truly, so that men may have nothing more to desire concerning this work.'

Artephius also wrote on astrology, prediction and the mysterious 'language of the birds' - which is why he is included here. It is this latter which links him soundly with Sufism. The 'language of the birds' - later popularly associated with St. Francis' supposed ability to commune with birds and animals - has its roots in an allegorical work, the *Parliament of the Birds*, a Sufi classic written by Fariduddin Attar (the Chemist). He died in 1220, it is said, aged 110. The *Parliament* was the most outstanding of his 114 books and, as an allegory of inner attainment, was the forerunner of *The Pilgrim's Progress* and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. The word used in the Persian version of Attar's book, *si-murgh*, means 'thirty birds,' which represented mankind, and Chaucer used thirty pilgrims in his story. Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* has also been borrowed from Attar. His influence can also be found in the *Roman de la Rose*, part of the Troubadour and Courtly Romance legacy and in the already-mentioned Order of Khidr, patron saint of the Sufis. Idries Shah says that passages from the *Parliament of the Birds* are still quoted within the Order today, and gives the following account of part of the initiation ceremonial:

'The sea was asked why it was dressed in blue, the colour of mourning, and why it became agitated as if fire made it boil. It answered that the blue robe spoke of the sadness of separation from the Beloved, "that it was the fire of Love which made it boil." Yellow, continues the ritual, is the colour of gold - the alchemy of the Perfected Man, who is

refined until he is in a sense gold. The robe of initiation consists of the Sufi blue mantle, with a hood, and a yellow band. Together these two colours when mixed make green, the colour of initiation, and nature, truth and immortality.⁶

Shah also notes that Attar's *Parliament* was written some 170 years before the Order of the Garter (St. George/Khidr) was instituted in about 1348 and which employs the same colours in its regalia.

By Fulcanelli's time, as we shall see later, the 'language of the birds' concept had taken on a broader meaning, although the continued awareness of its significance in terms of secret, initiatory processes demonstrates something of the continuing extent of hidden Sufi influence.

* * *

The surname of Albertus Magnus is not an allusion to his greatness, but simply a Latinized version of his family name, de Groot. He was born in 1205 in Suabia, at Larvigen, on the Danube. He was considered exceptionally stupid in his youth, but appears to have undergone some form of sudden illumination, connected with the Virgin image, and went on to become a great theologian and philosopher. He apparently believed that alchemical transmutation was possible, but placed great emphasis on the order of the various processes of the Work. According to the 16th-century alchemist Michael Maier, Albertus was initiated by the disciples of St. Dominic, and communicated the secret of the Philosopher's Stone to his pupil, Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). Aquinas seems to have thought alchemy possible, but very difficult. Yet, in his *Thesaurus Alchimiae*, which was dedicated to his friend, the Abbot Reginald, he writes of his own and his master's successes quite openly. 'Metals can be transmuted into one another,' he says, 'since they are of one and the same matter.'

An indication of Sufi influence on both men can be seen in a study of their works. Albertus, an encyclopaedic writer, emphasized the importance of self-knowledge gained by personal experience and Thomas, in his *Summa Theologica* (1273)

⁶ Idries Shah: *The Sufis*.

suggestively wrote: 'All I have written seems to me like so much straw *compared with what I have seen and what has been revealed to me.*' The fact that both men belonged to a wandering, mendicant Order would have given them ample opportunity for contact with Sufi teachers. Albertus, besides, was a great scholar of the Arabic language.

There is also a popular story about the pair which would seem to confirm their Sufic training. Albertus is traditionally said to have spent thirty years manufacturing a 'brass' or 'brazen' head with oracular powers. Several imaginative writers have suggested that this may have been an automaton, robot or computer of some kind. His pupil, Thomas, it is said, became so tired of the head's constant chattering, which attracted the attention of passers-by, that he smashed it with a hammer.

There is, however, an esoteric interpretation of this legend and, once again, I am indebted to Idries Shah Sayed for its explanation. He reveals that the Arab word for brass, which is connected with the concept of yellowness, or gold, is spelled SuFR.

'The Golden Head (*sar-i-tilai*),' he says, 'is a Sufi phrase used to refer to a person whose inner consciousness has been "transmuted into gold" by means of Sufic study and activity, the nature of which it is not permissible to convey here.'

In this context, Shah says, the statement 'I am making a head,' which is used by Dervishes to indicate that they are involved in secret exercises, might well have been used by Albertus. Outsiders, taking it literally, would misunderstand. It is certainly indicative that Albertus not only studied Sufi philosophy, but lectured in Paris on the works of Al-Farabi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and Ghazali - dressed in Arab robes.

Shah also points out that it was the same mistaken idea over an Arabic phrase which probably led to the accusation that the Knights Templar worshipped an idol, or head, known as Baphomet. This, he says, was probably a corruption of the Arabic *abu fihamat* (pronounced roughly, *bufi himat*), which means 'father' or 'source of understanding.'

A curiously similar interpretation of Baphomet was advanced by the Magus Eliphas Levi although, like many others after

⁷ Shah, *op cit*.

him, he depicted the Baphomet as a goat-headed hermaphrodite which has become associated with Satanism in popular literature. At least his verbal interpretation serves to show the flexibility of cabalistically-inspired word-juggling and encoded cipher. According to Levi, Baphomet should be spelled backwards to yield TEM. OHP. AB., which in turn, he says, signifies '*Templi omnium hominum pacis abbas* - father of the temple of universal peace among men.'

In the light of this information, it is quite possible that Thomas Aquinas spread the rumour that he had 'smashed' the head to discourage popular suspicion that he and his Master were delving into sorcery.

An interesting sidelight to this affair, is that the so-called Baphomet, which represents the Perfected Man, passed into heraldic symbolism with the Templars and survives today as the black, negro, or Turk's head often seen on English pub signs. Once again, the substitution of 'black' for 'wise' becomes obvious. Hugh de Payns, founder of the Order of the Knights Templar, incorporated three Saracen heads in his armorial bearings; to the casual observer they might have been taken for the heads of enemies defeated in battle, but to Order initiates, they denoted his debt to the 'wise' teachings of the Sufis.

* * *

Roger Bacon was a scientific pioneer, born near Ilchester, Somerset, in 1214. He was also a great visualiser. Aside from his actual discoveries and inventions, which included achromatic lenses, spectacles, principles of the telescope, the chemical role of air in combustion and the perfection of gunpowder, he anticipated the dynamics of the crane, the suspension bridge, diving apparatus, self-propelled vehicles, oarless vessels and flying machines. He claimed that many of these had been known to ancient civilisations and lost.

Bacon acknowledges Artephius as his spiritual Master in alchemy. He not only believed Artephius' claim to great longevity, but wrote that 'experimental science has manufactured not only gold of twenty-four degrees, but of thirty, forty and onward, according to pleasure.'

In his *Book of the Six Sciences*⁸, he describes a mysterious mirror which he calls *Almuchefti*. With it, Bacon says, a man may predict the future. The mirror must be constructed in accordance with certain laws of perspective and astrological influence, 'and after the body of the individual has been modified by alchemy.'

During his lectures at Oxford, Bacon used Sufi and Dervish texts as his sourcebooks, including Ibn Sabin's *Secrets of Illuministic Wisdom* and repeated the claim of Suhrawardi's *Wisdom of Illumination* that the so-called 'secret doctrine' of illuminism was common to the esoteric teachings of all ancient cultures. He said it was known to Noah and Abraham, the Chaldean and Egyptian Masters, to Hermes, Zoroaster, the Greek philosophers Pythagoras, Anaxagoras and Socrates - and the Sufis.

His identification as a Rosicrucian is also a pointer to the Sufi origin of his esoteric learning. In Arabic *wird*, meaning a dervish exercise, was used poetically by the Sufis as *ward*, which is a 'rose.' Coupled with the root *SLB*, which means 'to extract the marrow,' the phrase meant to obtain the inner value of the exercise. *SLB*, however, also means 'cross,' so that *ward SLB* became transliterated as Rose-Cross by Western founders of Rosicrucian movements. Originally, the rose motif was used in its symbolic-poetic sense by the dervish Order of Abdul-Qadir el Jilani, whose founder is known as the 'Rose of Baghdad.' (For a fuller account of the Rosicrucian movement and its origins, see Frances A. Yates: *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*, or A. E. Waite's *Real History of the Rosicrucians* and *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*.)

In a nutshell, then, the Secret Doctrine of the ancients, which is contained within alchemy, was the same as the inner teachings of the Sufis.

Bacon's actual alchemical writings are as enigmatic as those of some of his peers, but he certainly believed that 'it has been proved by certain experiments' that life can be considerably prolonged 'by secret experiences' and that 'herbs and stones and metals and other things' possessed miraculous powers,

⁸ Cited by Franciscus Picus and quoted by A. E. Waite: *Alchemists Through the Ages* (Rudolf Steiner Publications, New York, 1970.)

given the correct knowledge of how to manipulate them.

* * *

Like Albertus Magnus and Aquinas before him, Arnold of Villanova was a Dominican, who spent much of his life as a wandering teacher. He lived from about 1235 to 1311, studied medicine under John Calamida at Naples and, while he travelled, produced numerous treatises on medicine, magic and alchemy. Some were written in Valencia, others in Barcelona, Naples, Gascony, Piedmont, Bologna, Rome and even Africa. His reputation as a physician often resulted in him being called upon to administer to sick popes and monarchs and, for his services, Peter III of Aragon presented him with a castle in Tarragona.

Among his notable alchemical works are the *Thesaurus Thesaurum*, the *Rosarium Philosophorum* and the *Perfectum Magisterium*.⁹

His interest in Qabalism is also reflected in his treatise on the significance of the holy name *Tetragrammaton*, in Hebrew and Latin, which he published in 1292.

After a period of study in Paris, Arnold travelled throughout Italy and eventually entered Spain, but on hearing that his friend and fellow-chemist Peter d'Abano was in the hands of the Inquisition, took shelter under the patronage of Frederick, King of Naples and Sicily. A wise move, since d'Abano died on the rack.

Through his researches into chemical processes, Arnold discovered that carbon monoxide was poisonous and that decaying meat became toxic. He was also reputedly the first to use alcohol for making tinctures. In his alchemical writings he describes all the stages of the Great Work - though not necessarily in their correct order, a device adopted by many alchemists to conceal the secret of the Philosopher's Stone.

Although Arnold escaped the flames of the Inquisition, many of his writings did not. His books were burned at Paris and

⁹ Along with his *Scientia Scientiae* and *Testamentum*, these tracts are collected in the *Bibliotheca Chemicæ Curiosa* of J. J. Mangetus, (Cologne, 1702.)

Tarragona because they were held to be heretical. (He taught, for example, that charitable works were more laudable in the sight of God than celebration of the Mass; he railed against the corruption of the clergy and predicted the coming of the Antichrist.) He was imprisoned on two or more occasions for his outbursts, but managed to defend himself and secure his release.

During one of his several visits to Rome, he is said by the Jurisconsult John Andre to have demonstrated his alchemical prowess by transmuting iron bars into gold.

From around 1285 and well into the first decade of the following century, he taught at the celebrated medical faculty of the University of Montpellier, which, as we shall see, appears to have been a key centre for the transmission of alchemical knowledge during the 13th and 14th centuries.

* * *

Raymond Lully is said to have met Arnold at Naples and later to have studied under him at Montpellier. Lully was an alchemist whose life is clouded with so much confusion that he may, in reality, have been two men, one of whom took on the other's name. The result of this is that he was seen by Christians as a devout evangelist intent on converting Islamic Europe, by occultists as an alchemical adept and mystic, while his own writings indicate his Sufi influences and leanings. The explanation may well be, however, that Lully's philosophical and religious outlook went through various different transformations and that each of the above impressions of him were formed during different phases of his development.

It is known, for instance, that Lully, born in Palma, Majorca in 1229, did attempt to spread the gospel of Christ among Mohammedans. In doing so, however, he devoted years of study to Islamic writings and gained a thorough grasp of Arabic. Through these contacts, it is almost inevitable that he became known to the Sufi teachers of Saracen Spain - and began to follow the Sufi Path. As we have seen, the misunderstanding of Sufi aims and ideals outside their context led to many other Western seekers being branded as sorcerers or occultists.

The 19th-century Qabalist and magus, Eliphas Levi,

recognised Lully as a 'grand and sublime adept of Hermetic science.' This would, of course, be consistent with Sufi learning which, as we have seen, contained the ethos of alchemy.

Lully's great contribution to medieval knowledge was the invention of a movable table, rather like a planisphere, upon which combinations of correspondences could be inter-related.

In *A History of Magic and Experimental Science*, Lynn Thorndike assesses it as 'a logical machine which would constitute the same sort of labour-saving device in a scholastic disputation or medieval university as an adding machine in a modern bank or business office.'¹⁰

Lully's device incorporated a symbolic tree and intersecting triangles - like the supernal and infernal triads of the Qabalistic Tree of Life and its Sephiroth - along with concentric circles divided into segments. One of these rotated, like the planets on an astrolabe, while the rest stayed motionless like the apparent fixed stars.

With different tables and labelled segments and correspondences, Lully's device could be applied to different persuasions, such as theology, in which the circle represented god and sixteen divisions represented human qualities, or to medicine, in which the symbolic tree had branches representing elements, complexions, humours, organs, etc., while the quartered wheel signified ages, colours, shapes and sexes. The versatility of this graphic, mechanical system can be seen as one of the earliest applications of crude cybernetics - the science of systems. To the thinkers of the time, its logic and precision must have seemed as apparent as that of a computer or calculator to a modern business executive.

There is a story that some time after 1311 - four years before his death by stoning in North Africa - Lully visited England at the request of Edward II and made gold while an involuntary 'guest' in the Tower of London. But A. E. Waite has shown that the Lully of Majorca never visited England and says that, of all the many works ascribed to him, none dealt with alchemy.¹¹

¹⁰ Vol II, (Macmillan, New York, 1923).

¹¹ See *Alchemists Through the Ages*, op cit., and *The Brotherhood of The Rosy Cross* (University Books Inc., New Jersey, 1973.)

Waite says that in his *Ars Magna Sciendi* Lully states quite categorically that one species of metal cannot be changed into another, and that the gold of alchemy only resembles the true article.

On the other hand, it is certain that Lully was a disciple of Arnold of Villanova at Montpellier and that several alchemical treatises, including the *Clavicula*, appeared under his name. Lynn Thorndike speculates that these may have been written by one Raymond of Tárrega, a Jewish Qabalist of roughly the same period. The alchemical Lully, whoever he was, says the transmutation of metals depends upon them first being reduced to 'volatile sophic argent vive', and that the only metals worth reducing for this purpose are silver and gold.

And in the *Ultimum Testamentum R. Lulli*, speaking of his supposed alchemical work in the Tower of London, the author says: 'I converted at one time fifty thousand pounds weight of quicksilver, lead and tin, into gold.'

'Moreover,' Waite says, 'the alchemist who calls himself Raymond Lully was acquainted with nitric acid and with its uses as a dissolvent of metals. He could form *aqua regia* by adding sal ammoniac, or common salt, to nitric acid, and he was aware of its property of dissolving gold.'

Among his other para-chemical knowledge was the preparation of vegetable tinctures by strengthening spirit of wine with dry carbonate of potash; the coagulation of volatile alkali with alcohol; how to obtain alum from Rocca, and the distillation of rosemary herbs with water to produce an oil.

It is possible, of course, that the two Lullys, religious mystic and alchemist, were one and the same - a deliberate and typical scheme of mystification employed for protective purposes. Jacques Sadoul¹² adheres to this theory and suggests that Lully chose to keep his theological and alchemical works quite separate - by arranging to have the latter published only after his death, yet another strategy often used by alchemists.

What inclines me to agree with this hypothesis is that Lully is known to have made a pilgrimage to the shrine of St. James at Compostella in Spain - an initiatory journey undertaken by

¹² *Alchemists & Gold*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1972.)

several other noted alchemists – and later, on a retreat on Mount Randa, on his native island of Majorca, to have undergone some form of religious illumination. One tradition says that this took the form of an alchemical vision in which the leaves of nearby lentisk shrubs sprouted into the shapes of alphabetical letters of many languages in which he would later teach the Hermetic Art. (It is a fact that Lully persuaded the King of Aragon to establish a school of Arabic studies in Majorca, and persuaded the Pope at the Council of Vienne in 1311 to authorize chairs in Greek, Hebrew, Chaldean and Arabic at Rome, Paris, Oxford, Bologna and Salamanca.)

In addition, Lully admitted to having modelled his poem, *The Book of the Lover and His Beloved* (1283) on Sufic lines. Finally, and perhaps most significant, is his period of study and later teaching at Montpellier – as did his predecessors, Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, Roger Bacon, and his own master, Arnold of Villanova. This is an important fact not only in linking these adepts to one seat of learning, but because Montpellier had a powerful Qabalistic-Sufi grounding.

On this subject, Dr. D. Campbell, in *Arabian Medicine*, (London, 1926), wrote:

‘The period during which the literary sceptre was held by France coincided with the growth and development of the Arabist school of Montpellier, which came under the influence of the Arabized Jews of Spain. Montpellier, owing to its geographical location to Andalusia on the one hand, and Sicily and the Italian peninsula on the other ... drew numbers of students from the Latin West who, after having imbibed at the Arabized sources available at that time, once more scattered themselves in Europe, thus permeating the whole fabric of medieval culture with the gloss of Arabian erudition. The subsequent teaching of the alumni of Montpellier, who exercised a dominating influence over medical literature on the Continent and in England, is one of the outstanding historical facts of the middle ages. The newly developing varieties of romance, combined with the steady inpour of Arabic works from Southern Spain, which were in the main rendered into indifferent Latin, rendered both

the liquid languages and sciences (including medicine) particularly susceptible to Arabian influences.’¹³

It is interesting to note Dr. Campbell’s use of the word ‘scatter’ in the above passage. Whether he was aware of the influence of Sufism within Saracen Spain or not, there is a Sufi tradition of depositing pockets of knowledge, known as the technique of ‘scatter’ (Arabic, *nashr*). It was promoted in Spain by Ibn El-Arabi, the Murcian, born in 1164. The Arabic root NSHR, from which the word derives, also yields up other variant meanings, including to expand, spread, display, propagate, revivify, disperse, and to become *green* after rain (or initiation.)

It is difficult to see how, if Lully attended Montpellier, and studied under Arnold of Villanova, he did not become skilled in the alchemical art. Some writers claim that, on his presumed visit to England, Lully provided Edward II with increased revenue for his Crusades, not by making gold, but by suggesting an extra levy on wool.¹⁴

It was during his studies at the Sorbonne – before he joined the Montpellier faculty – that Lully struck up an acquaintance with the next link in my supposed chain of transmission. I place this fact here – out of chronological order – simply to keep the list of initiates in historical positions in the line of transmission.

Lully and Duns Scotus originally collided in an intense argument during one of the latter’s lectures at the Sorbonne. But so eloquent and convincing was Lully in defence of his theological viewpoint, that the two became friends.

Like Bacon, the Scottish-born philosopher Johannes Duns Scotus (c. 1265 or 1274-1308) was a prominent Franciscan and came under the influence of Sufi wisdom at the Order’s core. He taught that no one could attain to pure knowledge of theology by pure reason, but that revelation was a necessary element – a view which, significantly, is shared by practitioners of alchemy.

¹³ Quoted by Idries Shah, *op cit*.

¹⁴ For a fuller account of this conjectured period in Lully’s life, see Sadoul, *op cit*.

A hint at Duns Scotus' distinctly Sufic approach – an aspect which, I believe, has not been considered before – is the fact that, through his unorthodox teaching methods and those of his supporters, his name passed into common slang as the word 'Dunce.' To appreciate the significance of this, it should be remembered that, like the enigmatic and seemingly foolish sayings of the Zen Masters, Sufi teachers would resort to apparently irrelevant and ridiculous anecdotes or fables, some of them almost like music-hall jokes. Duns Scotus was no exception and, to the uncomprehending, was regarded by many of his contemporaries as an academic buffoon.

The inherent logic or message of Sufi-type stories only becomes apparent to the student either through reflection and personal experience – or, more properly, through sudden insight triggered by the psychological 'shock' of the initial illogicality of what confronts them. Many commentators have observed that so-called Sufi jokes are not jokes at all. But that depends on how they are viewed. Their real objective is not to arouse laughter and their essential quality is that of the unexpected.

One such Sufi story did, however, find its way into the patter of popular Western comedians, and I have even heard it re-worked on a TV programme only a few years ago. It is regarded as a corny old chestnut but originally, it concerned Mulla Nasrudin, a legendary character of Sufi lore and teaching-stories, invented to illustrate philosophical ideas on more than one level. One moonlit night, Mulla was encountered by a friend, searching in the street for some lost possession. When asked where he lost it, Mulla said, 'At home.' The friend asked why he was seeking it in the street. 'Because there is more light here,' replied the Mulla.

Puerile as it may seem on the surface, one lesson of the story would seem to be that it is wiser to seek (spiritually) in the light, than in the darkness of the obvious and mundane. This kind of apparent simpleton behaviour and punning, yet with deeper philosophical meaning, pervades Sufi lore and literature and was often used by the wandering 'harlequin' figure we looked at earlier. It found its way easily into the alchemical texts in the refined form of deliberate blinds, double entendres, paradoxes, allegories and play on words.

IV

Flamel, Jung, Blavatsky & The Hidden Masters

Often a cold shudder runs through me and I have asked myself whether I may not have devoted my life to a phantasy.

– Darwin, in a letter to Lyell, 1859.

A symbolism as rich as that of alchemy invariably owes its existence to some adequate cause, never to mere whim or play of fancy.

– C. G. Jung: *Psychology & Alchemy*,
(Routledge & Kegan Paul, 2nd revised edition, 1974.)

THE NEXT alchemist I want to look at in our parade of Masters is an extremely important one, as he ranks among those who provided fairly sound evidence for the reality of transmutation. In fact, the evidence for the reality of the Philosopher's Stone is probably stronger than that upon which most successful modern lawsuits are won. He is also interesting because he fits into a psychological intuitive pattern which is almost undetectable on casual examination of the lives of alchemists, but one which gains a strange and fascinating significance the more consideration one gives to the matter.

Like most disciplines of any value and duration, alchemy has attracted, during its almost 3,000 years of history, a host of band-waggoners – charlatans, tricksters, quacks, mountebanks and fakes. And it is the great number of these – exposed over the centuries for their often ingenious frauds – that has perhaps served most to reduce the Hermetic Art to the realm of ridicule and fairy-tale. This record of chicanery was probably welcomed by genuine alchemists, working alone and concerned with preserving privacy and secrecy.

But if trouble is taken to sift through the history of alchemy and examine the lives of the various operatives and their writings carefully, it becomes possible to separate the genuine seekers and adepts from the *souffleurs* or puffers. (This latter was a derogatory term used by alchemists of blundering amateurs, so-called because of their too-literal approach to practical work, and their consequent frantic use of the bellows.)

It is also possible to sift out several impressive examples of apparently genuine transmutation. Such a case - and among the most fully documented - is that of Nicholas Flamel of Paris. Flamel is probably one of the most unusual of all the medieval alchemists simply because there is little mystery surrounding him. Although his life has been outlined by several previous writers, I feel impelled to go over it in some detail here, because of some significant points and correspondences which I do not believe have been emphasized previously.

Flamel was born about 1330, near Pontoise, of poor, humble parents. He did, however, acquire an education which was well above average for his time. In his own words, he describes quite straightforwardly not only how he was drawn to alchemy, but how, after some twenty-four years of unflagging perseverance, encouraged by his wife, Perronelle, he finally discovered the secret of making gold.¹ During all this time and even after his astonishing success, he worked as a scrivener, or public letter-writer, and bookseller. (See Fig. 6.)

Unlike many of his alchemical peers, at no time did Flamel hide behind any Latinized alias, nor did he attempt to disguise the source of his wealth.

Orthodox historians - or, perhaps, unorthodox in view of their rejection of the facts - have tried to portray Flamel simply as a successful businessman, who made his unquestionable fortune on the side as a usurer or money-lender, then lavished it upon church and charity through guilt-motivated religious conviction.

But this argument is not sound, for a number of reasons.

Others who know or suspect the true secret of Flamel claim

1. The full text of Flamel's personal testimony is given in Appendix II.

that his considerable wealth could only have been realised through his attainment of the Philosopher's Stone.



Fig. 6. Nicholas Flamel (after a portrait by Taite, in A. Poisson, *Nicholas Flamel, sa vie, ses fondations, ses oeuvres*).

Flamel began his working life in a rented, cramped booth, only thirty inches square, in the rue des Ecrivains, Paris, opposite the Church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie, where he illuminated manuscripts and prepared legal deeds and documents. His only inheritance from his dead parents was a little house nearby, opposite the Marivaux Portal of the Church. When he married Perronelle, twice widowed and older than himself, her modest dowry allowed him to rent a second, lean-to wooden booth for his copyists and apprentices. (A deed still extant, constantly cited by French writers, signed by Flamel a few years after his marriage, shows that he and his bride owned little more than the ordinary, domestic goods of an average married couple.)

In his slightly improved circumstances, Flamel began buying and selling books. It is a fair surmise that his manuscript-copying, along with this later occupation, gave him his first sight of alchemical texts from which, even if only subconsciously, he absorbed some knowledge and familiarity with Hermetic symbolism.

One night, he had a dream in which an angel appeared to him and showed him a large, copper-bound book with pages of thin bark and engraved with strange hieroglyphic characters.

'Flamel,' the vision told him, 'behold this book of which thou understandest nothing; to many others but thyself, it would remain for ever meaningless, but one day thou shalt discern in its pages what none but thyself will see.'

Flamel reached out to take the book but, along with the angelic figure, it disappeared in an aura of light. For years the memory of the dream haunted his waking hours until, one day, a customer approached his booth offering for sale an old volume.

To Flamel's amazement the book, which he bought 'for only two florins', turned out to be identical with the one in his dream. It was the beginning of a lifetime devotion to the study of alchemy and eventually the attainment of the Philosopher's Stone.

Before going on with that part of Flamel's story, however, I would now like to examine a peculiarly similar set of dream correspondences which triggered Dr. C. G. Jung's long flirtation with alchemy.

It is well known that early in his investigations of the dreams of patients, Jung noticed that many people who sought his psychological advice told him of dreams in which rich symbolism featured. They were, Jung noted, often identical with symbolism that is found in ancient mystery religions, mythology, folklore, fairytales – and alchemy. 'Experiments showed,' he wrote, 'that these symbols brought with them new energy and new life to the people to whom they came.'

But it was not only his patients who experienced these curiously parallel symbols in dreams. Jung himself was aware of them in his own sleeping fantasies.

In his autobiographical *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*,² Jung wrote:

'Before I discovered alchemy, I had a series of dreams which repeatedly dealt with the same theme. Beside my house stood another, that is to say, another wing or annex

which was strange to me. Each time I would wonder in my dream why I did not know this house, although it had apparently always been there. Finally came a dream in which I reached the other wing. I discovered there a wonderful library, dating largely from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Large, fat folio volumes, bound in pigskin, stood along the walls. Among them were a number of books embellished with copper engravings of a strange character, and illustrations containing curious symbols such as I had never seen before. At the time I did not know to what they referred; only much later did I recognise them as alchemical symbols. In the dream I was conscious only of the fascination exerted by them and by the entire library ...'

It is easy to dismiss as fanciful, perhaps, the dreams of a 14th-century craftsman, in an age when marvels such as prophecy and alchemy were constantly rumoured and believed in. But when a modern scholar like Jung describes parallel experiences – in both himself and his patients – the phenomenon cannot be so easily dismissed.

Note the remarkable similarity of Jung's dream to that of Flamel – the book motif, *copper* engravings, strange symbols, illustrations and lettering he cannot decipher. The accurate prophetic nature of the dream is also difficult to explain.

Jung goes on: 'Some fifteen years later I had assembled a library very like the one in the dream.'

But that was not all. Jung experienced further dreams which he interpreted as anticipations of his eventual interest in alchemy. The 'crucial' one, he said, occurred in 1926. He dreamt that, after travelling through the South Tyrol on a horse-drawn carriage with a peasant driver, he came upon a palatial manor house. He and the coachman drove in through a gate into a broad courtyard. Then, suddenly, both sets of exit gates slammed shut on them. The driver jumped down from his seat on the carriage and exclaimed: 'Now we are caught in the seventeenth century.' In the dream, Jung resigned himself to the prospect, thinking: 'Well, that's that. But what is there to do about it? Now we shall be caught for years.' Then he had another more comforting thought: 'Someday, years from now, I shall get out again.'

² Fontana Library of Theology & Philosophy (London, 1973).

Determined to interpret the dream, Jung spent weeks and months, doggedly reading heavy volumes on the history of the world, of religion and philosophy, in the hope of discovering some key.

'Not until much later did I realise that it referred to alchemy, for that science reached its height in the seventeenth century,' he wrote.

He then goes on to explain, however, that the real trigger of his ensuing interest in alchemy was in 1928 when the Orientalist Richard Wilhelm sent him his translation of the Chinese philosophical and alchemical classic, *The Secret of the Golden Flower*. Jung, his appetite whetted, then asked a Munich book dealer to supply him with any books on alchemy he could find. The first to arrive was a collection of alchemical treatises in Latin, the *Artis Auriferae Volumina Duo* (1593).

But, as Jung confessed: 'I let this book lie almost untouched for nearly two years. Occasionally, I would look at the pictures, and each time I would think, "Good Lord, what nonsense! This stuff is impossible to understand."' ³

And yet, something plagued naggingly at Jung's inquisitive mind and eventually he sat down to examine the texts more closely. He found odd sentences he believed he understood and, more important, realised that the alchemists used symbolical language.

'One night, while I was studying them, I suddenly recalled the dream that I was caught in the seventeenth century. At last I grasped its meaning. "So that's it! Now I am condemned to study alchemy from the very beginning."' ³

On closer scrutiny, Jung found phrases recurring in the alchemical works - phrases by now familiar to western students of alchemy, such as *solve et coagula*, *unum vas*, *prima materia*, *Mercurium* and *lapis philosophorum*.

He began to compile a cross-referenced index of the phrases as if, he remarked, he were a philologist, trying to decipher an unknown language. He spent more than ten years on the project, filling volumes of his notebooks with excerpts from the texts.

³ Ibid.

He wrote:

'I had very soon seen that analytical psychology coincided in a most curious way with alchemy. The experiences of the alchemists were, in a sense, my experiences, and their world was my world. This was, of course, a momentous discovery: I had stumbled upon the historical counterpart of my psychology of the unconscious.'

And he concluded:

'A psychology of consciousness can, to be sure, content itself with material drawn from personal life, but as soon as we wish to explain a neurosis we require an anamnesis ⁴ which reaches deeper than the knowledge of consciousness. And when in the course of treatment unusual decisions are called for, dreams occur that need more than personal memories for their interpretation.' ⁵

So, Jung believed he had made a momentous discovery. And, in a psychological sense, he had. But at the same time it might be equally accurate to suggest that alchemy had discovered him. For even accepting that the human mind may contain information that goes beyond personal experience, knowledge which, perhaps, is inherited by a genetic process and dates back several generations, if not centuries, what has not been explained is the process by which this information is 'reactivated' as it were. Why should the unconscious suddenly select such information to present to the conscious mind in the symbolism of a dream? And if the psychology of the unconscious does work in this way, why should it choose to reactivate information in the form of alchemical symbolism - an archaic form which the majority of people would not understand anyway?

In trying to suggest an answer to these questions, we come now to one of the concepts within alchemy and other branches of the occult which the average person, particularly the

⁴ Anamnesis: recalling to mind; employed also in a medical sense of the history of an illness up to the point at which it is taken - *Dictionary of Psychology*, (Penguin Books, 1958.)

⁵ Jung op cit.

hardened sceptic, finds it difficult to accept. It is the idea of Secret or Hidden Masters – semi-legendary, superior intelligences, near-immortals, believed by some to guide the destiny of certain individuals or to influence the total future of mankind. It is conjectured that the successful alchemist – i.e., the Adept – may become one of these Hidden Masters once his work is completed and he has perfected the Stone. This is the reason for the need for immortality, or at least, considerable extension of the normal lifespan, so that the Master has time to survey the broad canvas of human development and evolution. Without such an extended view, it would be virtually impossible to determine what courses of action to take in attempting to influence the course of mankind's progress.

There are suggestions within occult tradition that to achieve the Stone is to *become* the Stone, in a sense. The one who does this achieves true immortality in that he escapes the cycle of successive incarnations. Instead of returning to earthly life, again and again, to pay off some karmic debt, the High Adept becomes one with the eternal matrix, the total Oneness of Cosmic Life itself. There are, however, it is said, some Masters who choose to remain on earth for some unspecific, but humanitarian purposes.

In *An Outline of Modern Occultism*⁶, Cyril Scott claims that these Masters form a Great White Lodge or Hierarchy of Adepts. These, he says, constitute the 'inner Government of our world.' To the criticism that the world is in a terrible mess for all the efforts of the assumed Masters, the answer is given that it might not be here at all were it not for their guidance. Besides, they would not be concerned with relatively short-lived affairs and phenomena of history, but with broader aspects of the evolutionary process.

The Masters, says Scott, 'only guide, advise and suggest, but never coerce.'

Some of them travel about the world to teach and initiate selected pupils, but most of their work is done 'on the inner planes in the meditative state.'

At the head of the secret Lodge, which is supposed to have its headquarters in the remote Himalayas, are three officials.

One, the *Manu*, is said to be Chinese in his outward aspect, to be at the head of the Root Races and responsible for racial evolution and characteristics; another, the *Mahachohan* occupies himself with cultural development and the rise and fall of civilisations. The third, simply known as the World-Teacher, is said to be concerned with evolution and religious development. In previous incarnations, he is supposed to have appeared on earth as Krishna in India and Christ in Palestine and is now said to be operating in the Lebanon as a Syrian. Another of his previous incarnations is said to have been the Israelite Old Testament leader Joshua (Yeheshua).

This latter conjecture is particularly intriguing, since Joshua was, according to the Bible, the son of Nun and Jewish Rabbinical tradition said that the true Messiah would be Ji-Nun, 'son of the Fish.' This designation also calls to mind Dhu'l-Nun, the transmitter of alchemy from Egypt.

Another important member of the Great White Lodge is known as the Hungarian Master who, according to Scott, travels the world on his mission as a High Initiate. Tradition is that he previously reincarnated as the 5th-century philosopher, Proclus, as a 'great English statesman and philosopher' (Francis Bacon, possibly?), and as the semi-legendary Comte de Saint-Germain, about whom more later. Another belief in this concept of voluntary reincarnation is that St. Paul is now a Cretan whose main brief is to oversee the Spiritualist Movement.

Cyril Scott is not, of course, the only upholder of such beliefs. Many occultists down to the present day have nurtured the idea of the divine guidance of mankind via the intervention of selected and highly advanced individuals.

Manly P. Hall, founder-president of the Philosophical Research Society of Los Angeles, has affirmed his own belief in a Brotherhood of Secret Masters, dedicated to the guidance and spiritual evolution of mankind, living in a remote Himalayan headquarters.

He says: 'There is an incontrovertible mass of evidence indicating the existence of initiated philosophers possessing a superior knowledge of divine and natural laws. There is also sufficient proof that these initiates were the agents of a World Fraternity or Brotherhood of Adepts that has existed from the

⁶ Dutton, New York, 2nd edition, 1950.

most remote time. This overfraternity has been called the Philosophic Empire, the Great School, the College of the Holy Spirit, and the Invisible Government of the World.'⁷

And in his Introduction and Commentary on the *Most Holy Trinosophia*, ascribed to the Comte de Saint-Germain, Hall says that Germain and Francis Bacon 'are the two greatest emissaries sent into the world by the Secret Brotherhood in the last thousand years.'⁸

Another powerful advocate of the Secret Masters hypothesis was the famous Madame Helena Petrovna Blavatsky, co-founder and Corresponding Secretary of the Theosophical Society. H.P.B. claimed to have met her personal teacher, the Master Morya, at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London. It was, she said, at the instigation of Morya and another Master, Koot Hoomi, that she and Colonel H. S. Olcott, founded the Theosophical Society in New York in 1875, to try to put into action a mission with which her secret teachers had charged her. The Society was named after the Theosophia (Wisdom of the Gods), a phrase coined in the 3rd century by Ammonias Saccas of Alexandria. Its main object was to revive something of the esoteric wisdom of the ancients in an attempt to combat western materialism.

In order to prepare her for this mission, Madame Blavatsky claimed she was initiated in Tibet, where her Masters lived, in two three-year periods. The first ended in 1856 and she returned to Tibet in 1868. She was, she said, taught the principles of the ancient wisdom or 'Secret Doctrine', as it came to be known. Next, her already inherent psychic and spiritual powers were developed so that she could go out into the world and, at any time or place, her Masters could contact her telepathically, giving her guidance and instructions. This took the material form of the foundation of the Theosophical Society and the production of her two massive works, *Isis Unveiled* and *The Secret Doctrine*.

Commenting on the feasibility of Secret Masters, the learned

Western authority on Buddhism and retired British High Court Judge, Christmas Humphreys, says:

'Nor is it difficult to accept, as all religions testify, the existence of highly advanced men who are masters of this common wisdom, under whatever name known, and that together, in the light of their spiritual development, they form a Brotherhood beyond the differences of race or colour.'⁹

There is a popular misconception among many today that Madame Blavatsky was exposed as a fraud, that her Masters never existed except in her imagination and that she forged the letters, said to have been written by them to the Orientalist A. P. Sinnett. Yet in fact, as Christmas Humphreys has shown, *The Mahatma Letters to A. P. Sinnett* (London, 1923), were actually sent between 1880 and 1884 and Sinnett published two books based upon them, *The Occult World* and *Esoteric Buddhism*, five years before H.P.B. published her *Secret Doctrine* in 1888. Also, Madame Blavatsky was writing regularly to Sinnett between 1880 and 1888 and her own and the Masters' handwriting can still be compared.

As Mr. Humphreys comments: 'How, and, more important, why should she write at immense length in duplicate, leaving the forged *Letters* of her Masters to see the light of day when first published thirty years after her death? The suggestion is foolish.'¹⁰

On the question of Madame Blavatsky's alleged fraudulent behaviour, Mr. Humphreys points out that the Society for Psychical Research investigator who reported on the case, Richard Hodgson, never saw the letters and alleged they were false and never saw any of H.P.B.'s so-called 'phenomena' - materialisations and apports etc., - and therefore claimed that they were fraudulent. Besides, the Society for Psychical Research does not hold corporate views and Hodgson's 'exposé' was in reality merely the opinion of one individual.

Unfortunately the adverse publicity, which has been shown

⁷ *Orders of the Quest: The Holy Grail*, (Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, California, 1949; reprinted 1976.)

⁸ Facsimile of an original MS in the Bibliothèque de Troyes and published by The Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, Calif.

⁹ *Men of Mystery*, anthology of essays in occultism, edited by Colin Wilson (Star Books, London, 1977.)

¹⁰ *op cit*.

by several authors to have been unjustified, has clung to the posthumous reputation of H.P.B., in the same way that the sensationalist nonsense of the popular press of his time has adhered to the spectre of Aleister Crowley. Crowley may have been wildly egotistical and perverse, but he certainly was not the 'human monster' and 'wickedest man in the world' which the more scurrilous rags of his day made him out to be. In the same way, a careful examination of the Blavatsky affair shows that her alleged frauds were more due to a couple of charlatans named Horos who tried to take over the Indian headquarters of her movement and the faulty judgement of the SPR investigator.

Perhaps the best vindication of H.P.B. came from a little-noted source – a genuine Tibetan lama. In his Introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, W. Y. Evans-Wentz says of its translator: 'The late Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup was of opinion that, despite the adverse criticisms directed against H.P. Blavatsky's works, there is adequate internal evidence in them of her intimate acquaintance with the higher lamaistic teachings, into which she claimed to have been initiated.'¹¹

Indirectly, no less a person than Jung himself appears to have acknowledged at least the possibility of events being guided and ordered on something more than a mundane level. We have already seen how Dr. Jung acknowledged Richard Wilhelm as the man who gave him the flickerings of insight into alchemy – by sending him a translation of the *Golden Flower*.

By his own account, Jung met Wilhelm in Darmstadt in the early twenties, in Zurich in 1923, when Wilhelm lectured on the oracular Chinese Book of Change, the *I Ching*, at the Psychology Club. Earlier, in 1920, Jung had been experimenting with the *I Ching* at Bollingen, using reeds in place of the traditional yarrow stalks or ancient Chinese coins, to cast his hexagrams.

'All sorts of undeniably remarkable results emerged,' Jung commented, '– meaningful connections with my own thought

¹¹. *The Tibetan Book of the Dead (Bardo Thodol)*, trans. Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup; ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, (Oxford University Press, 1927.)

processes which I could not explain to myself.'¹² Unfortunately, Jung admits, he did not take notes of the 'amazing coincidences' which emerged.

A few years after these experiments – whose results he later confirmed by allowing patients to consult the oracle with great success – Wilhelm's translation and commentary was published. When Wilhelm lectured in Zurich, Jung made his acquaintance and the two men compared notes.

It emerged that it was an old Chinese sage, Lau Nai Sün, who had introduced Wilhelm to the *I Ching* and Chinese yoga philosophy. Jung says that when the last page of the translation of Wilhelm's *I Ching* was finished – a work in which the sage had collaborated – and early printer's proofs were arriving, Lau Nai Sün died.

'It was as if his work were completed and he had delivered the last message of the old, dying China to Europe,' Jung wrote. 'And Wilhelm had been the perfect disciple, a fulfilment of the wish-dream of the sage.'

As a result of staying in Europe, teaching at the China Institute in Frankfurt-am-Main, Jung noticed that Wilhelm, who had become completely absorbed by the earlier influence of Chinese philosophy and culture, began to revert to Western ways and theological outlook. This is all the more remarkable since, when they first met, Wilhelm had 'seemed completely Chinese' to Jung 'in outward manner as much as in his way of writing and speaking.'

Eventually, Wilhelm fell ill with amoebic dysentery and, during his confinement, confessed to the concerned Jung that his dreams were filled with landscapes of the China he had left behind – almost as if something were recalling him.

Wilhelm's illness continued for many months, gradually growing worse. Jung wrote:

'A few weeks before his death, when I had had no news from him for a considerable time, I was awakened just as I was on the point of falling asleep, by a vision. At my bed stood a Chinese in a dark blue gown, hands crossed in the sleeves. He bowed low before me, as if he wished to give me

¹² Jung, op cit.

a message. I knew what it signified. The vision was extraordinarily vivid. Not only did I see every wrinkle in the man's face, but every thread in the fabric of his gown.¹³

Jung did not elaborate on knowing what the materialised Lau's message was, but it is possible to grasp an understanding of it by implication. This incident appears to confirm the belief, long held by serious occultists, that esoteric wisdom can be and is deliberately transmitted to selected people. Wilhelm had been one of these 'messengers.' Lau appeared to Jung to signify that his task had been fulfilled.

Whatever else may be said, the Wilhelm-Jung contact revitalised psychology and, indirectly, via Jung's own interest, also gave a new and interesting approach to alchemy. Unfortunately, scientific materialism took the Jungian interpretation not as a new direction to be examined and developed, but as a conclusion: 'Well, that's that. He's solved it - alchemy was really only psychology in disguise.'

Yet nobody appeared to have objected that a psycho-spiritual 'explanation' of alchemy was not a real solution to the problem. Although Jung had some profound insights into the psychological motivations of the alchemists, he in no way denied the *physical* side of the art. Nor, let it be added, did he successfully explain its entire *raison d'être*. Despite the subconscious relief no doubt initially felt by those who welcomed Jung's psychological interpretation, a lot of alchemical hardware was left lying about embarrassingly.

Besides, if there were no physical alchemy, how is one to account for the various chemical discoveries which arose as side issues of experimentation? We have already noted a few of these in connection with the lives of alchemists we have examined. Here are several more: Albertus Magnus produced potassium lye and was the first to describe the chemical make-up of cinnabar, white lead and minium; Paracelsus introduced chemical compounds into medicine and was the first to describe zinc; Giambattista della Porta (1541-1615) manufactured tin monoxide; Van Helmont (1577-1644) acknowledged the existence of gases; Glauber identified sodium

¹³ Jung, op cit.

sulphate; Hennig Brandt isolated phosphorus; Johann Friedrich Böttger (1682-1719) was the first European to manufacture porcelain, and Blaise Vignere (1523-96) discovered benzoic acid.

We may now return to the story of Nicholas Flamel - an embarrassment to the materialist sceptic - in which it is easy to note evidence of an actual transmission process operating at a subtle level.

The book which Flamel first dreamt about and then bought had twenty-one pages engraved on thin bark (papyrus?) with some metal instrument (a stylus?). The strange hieroglyphics on its cover were unintelligible to Flamel, although he could read the Latin inscriptions inside.

The title page said: ABRAHAM THE JEW, PRINCE, PRIEST, LEVITE, ASTROLOGER, AND PHILOSOPHER, TO THE NATION OF JEWS, BY THE WRATH OF GOD DISPERSED AMONG THE GAULS, SENDETH HEALTH.

Following this was a string of powerful magical curses, including the mysterious word *MARANATHA*, threatening anyone who read the book 'except he were Sacrificer or Scribe.' Whether Flamel's profession of scrivener fell into this category or not, he studied the book for twenty-one years. On his own admission, apart from a few alchemical symbols which were obvious - the figure of Mercury, pursued by a scythe-wielding Father Time - the text and its seven pages of illustrations remained meaningless to him. When he showed a couple of copies of the illustrations, which he had painted on the wall of his home, to acquaintances and told them they came from a work on the Philosopher's Stone, he was laughed at.

The only person, apart from his wife, who became equally fascinated as Flamel was with the book, was a physician, named Master Anselm.¹⁴ Yet even he, who had carried out some alchemical study, could not unlock the book's secrets.

At last, in utter frustration, Flamel did the only remaining sensible thing to save himself being obsessed for life by his

¹⁴ By pure coincidence, Robert Graves refers to a Brother Anselm of Turmeda, a Catalan Christian mystic, who 'was well known also as the illuminated Sufi sage, Abdulla el-Tarjuman "the Interpreter."' See his Introduction to Idries Shah's *The Sufis*.

dream and the enigma of the book. With the approval and encouragement of Perronelle, he adopted mendicant's garb, pilgrim's staff and begging bowl and, with copies of the book's illustrations, set off for Spain where he knew there were learned Rabbis. Significantly – like Raymond Lully before him – he went to the shrine of St. James of Compostella.

After his devotions there and during his homeward journey, he was introduced in Léon to a Jewish physician named Master Canches, to whom he showed the illustrations. This mysterious Rabbi – who had already conversed knowledgeably about the Qabalah – was aghast. The pictures, he informed Flamel, were from the long lost *Aesch Mezareph*, the book of the Rabbi Abraham. Immediately, he suggested returning to Paris with Flamel and, en route, began deciphering and interpreting the meaning of the book and its pictures for him. Master Canches fell ill during the voyage and died at Orleans, where Flamel arranged for his burial in the Church of the Holy Cross.

Sadly, Flamel returned to his wife and home and began to apply the knowledge his travelling companion had taught him to practical experiment. After three years, he was successful.

At noon, on Monday, January 17, 1382, he transmuted half-a-pound of mercury into 'pure silver, better than that of the mine, as I myself assayed, and many others assayed many times.' Then again, on the following April 20, he transmuted a similar amount of mercury, while his wife looked on, 'into almost as much pure gold, better assuredly than common gold, more soft and pliable.'

Flamel went on to perform further transmutations at intervals – and made enough gold to become a millionaire.

There is little doubt that Flamel was speaking quite literally of physical transmutation, because within a very short time, the once modestly-off street scrivener and book-dealer had become a full-scale property developer, charity benefactor, and owner and designer of many impressive buildings in Paris. He began to endow chapels, churches, cemeteries, charnel-houses and hospitals all over the city, the deeds for which, according to constantly-quoted French archivists, still exist. At his own expense, he restored the Cemetery of the Innocents and had its arches inscribed with alchemical symbols and frescoes, depicting the process of manufacturing the Philosopher's Stone using

colour sequences. He placed bas-relief likenesses of himself and Perronelle in the stonework.

It was rather like an East End barrow-boy suddenly taking on the restoration and upkeep of London's cathedrals, abbeys and churches single-handed.

It is interesting to note the similarity between the seemingly fortuitous transmission of Chinese alchemy and the *I Ching* oracular system to the West via Lau Nai Süan, Richard Wilhelm and C. G. Jung, with Flamel's own enlightenment. Each has its parallel factors: a dream of a book or books, an intermediary interpreter (Master Anselm and Richard Wilhelm), a long and laborious search and, ultimately, an intermediary who, in his own way, helped ensure the successful fulfilment of the transmission and its significance (Lau Nai Süan and Master Canches.) It may also be significant that both the Chinese sage and the Jewish Rabbi died once their missions had been completed.

Eventually and probably inevitably, word of Flamel's sudden financial success filtered back to King Charles VI, who sent a tax inspector to investigate. There is some dispute as to what course Flamel's life took from this point. One story is that Flamel bribed the inspector, a M. de Cramoisy, with a vial of the Powder of Projection, because from then on Flamel was left to enjoy his good fortune and charitable work. The implication is that M. de Cramoisy invented some plausible yarn to cover up Flamel's lavish charity. What the inspector did with his portion of the precious powdered Stone is not recorded. Although, according to Pierre Borel, Councillor and Physician-in-Ordinary to the King, the powder 'is said to have been preserved in that family for many years.'¹⁵

There is also some doubt as to when, or indeed if, Perronelle and her husband died. According to Flamel's own testimony, his wife died in 1413, for he says: 'At that time when I wrote this Commentary in the year one thousand four hundred and thirteen, in the end of the year, after the decease of my faithful companion ...'

Sadoul, however, says she died 'in either 1397 or 1404',

¹⁵ *Treasury of Gallic and French Discoveries and Antiquities*, quoted by Sadoul, op cit.

although he does not elaborate on why there should be some doubt. Perronelle, he says, was buried in the Cemetery of the Innocents.

As for Flamel himself, Sadoul quotes the 19th-century historian Vallet de Viriville that 'Nicholas Flamel died in 1418' and 'bought a burial place for himself in the Church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie.' Why he did not choose to be buried in the same grave as his beloved Perronelle is not explained.

A. E. Waite, however, after quoting briefly from Flamel's Last Will and Testament of November 22, 1416, says he lived three years after making it, 'dying about 1419.'

An even more curious anomaly is in the account of the noted twentieth-century English alchemist, Archibald Cockren. He quotes Flamel's dates as 1330 to 1418 in the beginning of his chapter on Flamel. Then, at the end of the same chapter, Cockren makes the remarkably inconsistent statement: 'Nicholas Flamel died eventually in 1415 *at the age of one hundred and sixteen years.*'¹⁶ (My italics.)

There does not seem to be a rational explanation for this anomaly. It is unlikely that Cockren was nodding - an editor or proof-reader would almost certainly have spotted the discrepancy.

There is absolutely no doubt that Flamel was a genuine alchemist. The internal evidence of his own writings bears all the hallmarks of a quite legitimate alchemical career and demonstrates a deep understanding of his subject. But did he make gold? His sudden gain of immense wealth admits of no other explanation. Many writers, sceptical of the practicability of alchemical transmutation, have suggested that he was so successful in his craft as a scrivener and bookseller that he made money in the ordinary way. But, as Sadoul rightly observes: 'this last is an obvious absurdity to anyone who knows anything about the standard of life of a craftsman in the Middle Ages.'

Other authors - notably Gabriel Naudé - have claimed that Flamel managed the business affairs of wealthy Jews and, on their banishment from France and the confiscation of their

property, put his detailed knowledge of their finances to use. In other words, he accepted their bribes to withhold information from the royal tax inspectors. But this argument collapses on the simple evidence of history. Two of the three expulsions of the Jews took place before Flamel was born - in 1308 and 1320. The third - in 1393 - did not involve confiscation of their money and property. They were simply told either to convert to Christianity or get out. Many, according to the historian Mezeray, chose the former course, if only by paying lip service to the Church. Besides, to amass the fortune required to carry out the works which he did, Flamel would have had to control the wealth of the entire Jewish population of Paris! In any case, Flamel's success came ten years previous to the third expulsion - in 1382.

The physical evidence of Flamel's works survived his presence in Paris for centuries - along with its distinctively alchemical symbolism. The historian Lenglet du Fresnoy says that as late as 1742 the arch, with its hieroglyphic figures, stood in the Cemetery of the Holy Innocents. In two niches on the inner side of this arch were statues of St. James and St. John and, below the latter, the figure of Flamel himself, reading a book, its pedestal inscribed N.F. Unfortunately, the progression of colours denoting the changes in the alchemical process had been defaced by that time. Also in the same cemetery was a charnel-house, or repository for bones which had been disinterred during the creation of new graves, and on one of its pillars was the inscription:

This charnel-house was made and donated
to the Church, for the Love of God, 1399.

N.F.

On the left of the Marivaux portal of the Church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie, was a bas-relief of Flamel kneeling at the feet of St. James, while his wife Perronelle was depicted on the right-hand side, paying homage to St. John. They were marked, respectively, N and P.

In the street of Notre Dame at the Genevieve of Arden portal was a statue of Flamel in a niche, kneeling beside a desk and regarding St. James. Beneath it was the inscription: 'N.F. This portal was built in 1402, by the alms of many.'

¹⁶ *Alchemy Rediscovered & Restored*, (Rider & Co., 1940).

Also, in the street of the Cemetery of St. Nicholas of the Fields, was an unfinished hospital wall bearing Flamel's initials.

When the Church of Saint-Jacques-la-Boucherie was demolished in 1717, an inscribed tablet from the tomb of Flamel went missing. Cockren says that it turned up after many years in a greengrocer's shop in the rue des Arias, where the owner had been using the smooth marble back as a chopping board. The tablet is now preserved in the Musée de Cluny. I saw it on a recent visit to Paris.

In bas-relief, it depicts Christ, St. Peter and St. Paul and between them are the Sun and Moon - the alchemical symbols of Philosophic Sulphur and Mercury, and of Gold and Silver. The inscription says that Nicholas Flamel, formerly a scrivener, left to the Church certain rents and houses that he had bought in his lifetime and had made gifts to various churches and hospitals in Paris. The inscription reflects the humility of a genuine humanitarian and a true Philosopher of the Hermetic Art.

To return to the mystery of Flamel's supposed death.

The 18th-century traveller and writer, cartographer and antiquarian, Paul Lucas, tells the following amazing story in his *Journey Through Asia Minor* (Amsterdam, 1714):

'I was at Bronosa, in Natolia, and, going to take the air with a person of distinction, came to a little mosque, which was adorned with gardens and fountains for a public walk; we were quickly introduced into a cloister, where we found *four dervishes*, who received us with all imaginable civility, and desired us to partake of what they were eating. We were told, what we soon found to be true, that they were all persons of the greatest worth and learning; one of them, who said he was of Usbec Tartary, appeared to be more accomplished than the rest, and I believe verily he spoke all the principal languages of the world. After we had conversed in Turkish, he asked me if I could speak Latin, Spanish or Italian. I told him, if he pleased, to speak to me in Italian; but he soon discovered by my accent that it was not my mother-tongue, and asked me frankly what country I came from. As soon as he knew that I was a native of France, he

spoke to me in as good French as if he had been brought up in Paris. "How long, sire," said I, "did you stay in France?" He replied that he had never been there, but that he had a great inclination to undertake the journey.

'I did all in my power to strengthen that resolution, and to convince him that France was the nursery of the learned, and its king a patron of the sciences, who defrayed the expense of my travels for collecting notices of antiquities, drawings of monuments, correcting maps, and making a collection of ancient coins, manuscripts, etc., all of which he seemed to approve civilly. Our conversation being ended, the dervishes brought us to their house, at the foot of the mountain, where, having drank coffee, I took my leave, but with a promise, however, that I would shortly come and see them again.

'On the 10th, the dervish whom I knew for an Usbec came to pay me a visit. I showed him all the manuscripts I had bought, and he assured me they were very valuable, written by great authors. He was a man every way extraordinary in learning; in external appearance he seemed to be about thirty years old, but from his discourse, I was persuaded that he had lived a century.

'He told me he was one of seven friends, who travelled to perfect their studies, and, every twenty years, met in a place previously appointed. I perceived that Bronosa was the place of their present meeting, and that four of them had arrived. Religion and natural philosophy took up our thoughts by turns; and at last we fell upon chemistry, alchemy and the Cabala. I told him all these, and especially the philosopher's stone, were regarded by most men of sense as mere fictions.

'"That," replied he, "should not surprise you; the sage hears the ignorant without being shocked, but does not for that reason sink his understanding to the same level. When I speak of a sage, I mean one who sees all things die and revive without concern; he has more riches in his power than the greatest king, but lives temperately, above the power of events."

'Here I stopped him: - "With all these fine maxims, the sage dies as well as other people." "Alas!" said he, "I perceive that you are unacquainted with sublime science.

Such a one as I describe dies indeed, for death is inevitable, but he does not die before the utmost limits of his mortal existence. Hereditary disease and weakness reduce the life of man, but the sage, by the use of the true medicine, can ward off whatever may hinder or impair the animal functions for a thousand years.

'Surprised at all I heard, "And would you persuade me," said I, "that all who possessed the philosopher's stone have lived a thousand years?" He replied gravely: - "Without doubt every one might; it depends entirely on themselves." At last I took the liberty of naming the celebrated Flamel who, it was said, possessed the philosopher's stone, yet was certainly dead. He smiled at my simplicity, and asked me with an air of mirth: - "Do you really believe this? No, no, my friend, Flamel is still living; neither he nor his wife are dead. It is not above three years since I left both the one and the other in the Indies; he is one of my best friends." Whereupon he told me the history of Flamel, as he heard it from himself, the same as I had read in his book, until at last when Charles VI, who was then upon the throne, sent M. Cramoisi (sic), a magistrate, and his master of requests, to enquire from Flamel the origin of his riches, when the latter at once saw the danger he was in.

' "Fame can sometimes be very inconvenient, but a wise man may avoid it by taking precautions. Flamel realised that he was sure to be arrested as soon as he was suspected of possessing the Philosopher's Stone, and there was little doubt that it could not be long before he was accused of being an alchemist once the stories of his munificence were noised abroad. He avoided persecution by having the deaths of himself and his wife published. On his advice, she feigned an illness and when it had seemingly run its course she was reported to be dead, although in fact she was in Switzerland, awaiting his joining her. Instead of herself, a log of wood was buried, dressed in her clothes; and, so that everything might be done with due ceremony, the interment took place in one of the chapels she had been instrumental in having built. Later on he adopted the same stratagem and, since money can make most things possible, little difficulty was experienced in winning over medical and clerical agreement

to the deception. He left a Will in which he requested that he should be buried in the same grave as his wife and that a pyramid should be erected over his sepulchre. So, while the living Adept was on his way to join his wife in Switzerland, a second log of wood was buried in his stead. Since then both have lived their lives as Philosophers, sometimes in one country, sometimes in another. This is the true story of Nicholas Flamel, and not what you believe or what is foolishly believed in Paris, where there are very few people who have any true knowledge." '

V

Gold-makers Galore

'We hear it said that the idea of the philosopher's stone was an error, but all our views have been developed from errors, and that which we today regard as truth in chemistry may, perhaps, before tomorrow, be recognised as a fallacy.'

- J. von Liebig: *Familiar Letters in Chemistry*
(4th edition, London, 1859.)

'Great is God.

This is the rod of Hermes: touch what you will with it, they say,
and it becomes gold.'

- Epictetus: Arrian: *Discourses*, iii, 20.

ACCORDING TO Eugene Canseliet, Fulcanelli's original and prime influence was Basil Valentine, a firm favourite among many alchemical researchers and experimenters down the ages. But although Valentine's works are constantly consulted, little is known about the Adept's true identity. His alchemical pseudonym means 'mighty prince' and, as we shall see later of Fulcanelli, his is a classical alchemical case of The Man Who Never Was.

It is not known for certain whether Valentine flourished in the 12th, 13th or 14th century but, as early as 1515, the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I ordered a thorough search to be carried out in the Benedictine archives at Rome, but without finding even a trace of the mysterious friar's existence.

He is said to have been born in 1394 at Mayence (Mainz), to have joined the Benedictine Brotherhood and become Canon of the Priory of St. Peter at Erfurt, in Germany. Many historians of alchemy have supposed him to have been a fictitious figure, possibly the symbolic head of a particular school of alchemical

thought under whose name various works were published by anonymous operators. But a History of Erfurt dated 1675 by Johannes M. Gudemus says that Valentine was at the Priory by 1413 and describes him as having a profound knowledge of nature.

In alchemical terms, Valentine's name is most commonly associated with antimony, a lustrous, silver-white metal, found in nature as stibnite, antimonite or antimony sulphide, and as a compound with arsenic, silver, nickel and oxide. Thanks to Valentine, who was the first to use antimony medically, it has been employed as an emetic, expectorant and diaphoretic, although in large doses it is a poison. It has also been used effectively in the treatment of blackwater fever and sleeping sickness.

The supposition that antimony was so-named by Valentine because of the violent effect it had on the monks upon whom he first tried it out is amusing, but unlikely. Valentine wrote originally in High Dutch and German and antimony in the latter language is 'speissglas,' which clearly bears neither phonetic nor interpretive similarity to the French 'antimoine', supposedly suggesting hostility to monks.

Nonetheless, Valentine's most famous work is *The Triumphal Chariot of Antimony* (*Currus Triumphalis Antimonii*, Leipzig, 1604 and 1611). Along with his *Twelve Keys*, it remains his most-quoted tract. Every letter and syllable of the *Triumphal Chariot* is held to be significant, 'even to the pointes and prickes.'

Valentine is believed to have attained the Philosopher's Stone for he describes it - as white or red, 'a stone and yet scarcely a stone; one nature operates therein.' He also says: 'Its colour ranges from transparent red to dark brown, from the colour of a ruby to that of a garnet and it is incredibly heavy.'

Via his meticulous researches, Valentine is acknowledged as having originated many chemical preparations, including:

The extraction of brandy by distilling wine and beer and rectifying the distillation on potassium carbonate;

The preparation of hydrochloric acid from sea salt and sulphuric acid, (oil of vitriol);

The extraction of copper from its pyrites by first transforming it into copper sulphate and then plunging an iron bar into

the product's liquid dissolution;

The technique of making sulpho-ether by distilling a mixture of spirit of wine and sulphuric acid.

There are varying stories about how Valentine's writings came to light posthumously. Like Lully, he appears to have wanted them to remain unpublished during his lifetime. *The Secret Books or Last Testament* was first published in Strasbourg in 1645 and its title-page inscription in the London edition of 1671 says:

'The Last Will and Testament of Basil Valentine, Monke of the Order of St. Bennet. Which alone, he hid under a table of marble, behind the High-Altar of the Cathedral Church, in the Imperial City of Erford; leaving it there to be found by him whom God's Providence should make worthy of it.'

In his Preface, Valentine says:

'I do not desire it should be buried with me, to be a prey and food for worms, but it shall be left above ground, and kept secret from wicked men, and my purpose is, that it shall be laid into a secret place, where none shall come near it, but he, for whom God hath ordained it, other writings of mine shall sooner see the public light.'

Other works of Valentine are indeed said to have been hidden in a pillar of the Priory Church and were only discovered some years after his death when a thunderbolt struck the building and damaged the masonry. Whether this story is true or not, it is consistent with Valentine's wishes as given in his Will.

From an alchemical standpoint, Valentine's importance would seem to be that he re-directed the attention of his fellow-seekers to the third principle of salt, although several Arabian authors before him had worked with the triune principles of mercury, sulphur and salt. He said that:

'All things are constituted of three essences - namely, mercury, sulphur and salt ... But know that the Stone is composed out of one, two, three, four and five. Out of

five - that is, the quintessence of its own substance. Out of four, by which we must understand the four elements. Out of three and these are the principles of all things. Out of one and this is the first essence of everything which emanated from the primal fiat of creation.'

Students of the Qabalah will immediately recognise parallels here between Valentine's system of emanations from the 'primal fiat of creation', and the symbolic Sephiroth on the Tree of Life which emanate from the limitless and unknowable *Ayn Soph*.

It is not known who was Valentine's master or initiator, but it is significant that before he wrote down the fruits of his researches, he made a journey of pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. James of Compostella in Spain, like Lully and Flamel before him. In *The Triumphal Chariot*¹, he writes of his 'arduous pilgrimage' and, although he does not elaborate, says mysteriously and intriguingly that he made it 'in consequence of a vow.' A vow to whom? Perhaps he was visited at the Priory by some wandering, unknown Master who secretly urged him to go there.

The date of Valentine's death is as uncertain as his identity. But his influence is undeniable and remains strong, even today. The modern alchemist Lapidus places great importance on the role of antimony in the Great Work. He points out that the first word of *The Secret Book of Artephius*, a 12th-century work, is 'antimony.' So, although Valentine is credited with the first medical application of the element, he was certainly by no means the first to consider it valuable in alchemy.

Lapidus calls antimony 'the metal which was rarely mentioned in alchemical literature and, even where noticed, was passed over as though it were of no account. The reader might search in hundreds of alchemical works, and still not come across the metal called antimony. Yet Artephius is so frank that, right at the outset, he makes known to us the secret, that antimony is essential to the work.'²

Count Bernard of Treviso, or Bernard Trevisan as he is

¹ (James Elliott & Co., London, 1893.)

² Lapidus: *In Pursuit of Gold*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1976.)

often called, was the son of a physician and was born in the Mark or subdivision of Treviso, in the State of Venice, in 1406. The story of his search for and discovery of the Philosopher's Stone has a ring of credibility about it, especially because of his amazing persistence in the face of constant failure and frustration over a remarkably long period. He began his alchemical researches at the tender age of fourteen and did not achieve success, on his own admission, until he was eighty-three years old! Even then, in the glorious light of his triumph, he was fated to live with his secret for only one more year.

The case of Trevisan is one which quite forcefully emphasizes that it is neither the transmutation of base metals nor the life-prolonging elixir which are the ultimate and absolute objects of the alchemical search. Otherwise, why should a man strive for so long - and still rejoice, even when his triumph comes at so late a stage in his life? Obviously, the condition of Perfection, or of Supreme Illumination, which discovery of the Stone affords, is quite ineffable and transcends such mundane considerations as the supposed finality of death.

Trevisan, encouraged by his physician father, originally studied Jabir and Al-Razi. He spent vast sums of money pursuing one or another system - all to no avail. On different occasions throughout his search, he used various substances as his *prima materia*, none of which was satisfactory: rectified alcohol; sea salt, silver and mercury; the shells, whites and yolks of eggs; sulphate of iron distilled eight times in vinegar; mercury, silver, sulphur and olive oil; and gold, silver and mercury. In his search for the correct method, he visited Spain, Italy, England, Scotland, Holland, Germany, France, Egypt, Persia, Palestine, Greece and Rhodes, and collaborated with various clerics, philosophers and souffleurs along the way.

As far as can be gathered, Trevisan relied upon no particular Master when he successfully manufactured the Stone, but instead placed his faith in prayer and divine guidance and a careful, comparative study of the alchemical texts, noting the areas in which the different writers seemed to agree or coincide. His most famous work is known as the *Allegory of the Fountain* and is contained in his *Treatise on the Natural Philosophy of Metals*.

The *Allegory* is a dream-like account, reminiscent of a part

of the Holy Grail quest, of the alchemical process involving the bathing of a king in a heated secret fountain, enclosed in an oak tree and closed with a round white stone.

'Whosoever upon reading this book does not understand the Stone by himself,' Trevisan says, 'will never understand the work, however much he may operate. For in this very parable, the whole work is contained, in practice, days, colours, regimens, ways, dispositions, and continuations, which I have narrated, moved by piety, charity, and compassion alone towards desolate operators in this most precious secret.'

While it is difficult to pinpoint any particular figure who might have enlightened Trevisan and set him on the correct path to Illumination, the *Allegory of the Fountain* contains a highly important clue to Trevisan's possible influence by Sufi sources. It comes during the progression of colours which the alchemist describes as those of the garments of the king who bathes in the secret fountain.

According to Trevisan's fable, the King arrives at the fountain and, in a precise order, divests himself of his clothing, handing each item to a succession of attendants, personified as the gods, or planetary influences, of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Luna and Sol, the sun. The order is as follows: gold (his outer robe), black (a velvet doublet), white (an inner shift), and red (his blood-red flesh.) In the alchemical process, these are the major stages of the operation in a shuffled order, normally given as *nigredo* (blackening, putrefaction, death); *albedo* (whitening, regeneration, rebirth); the yellowing of enlivening fermentation and purification, and finally *rubedo* (reddening, exaltation and final perfection).

This allegorical process - often deliberately placed in the wrong order by alchemical writers - corresponds to a Sufi system of activating *lataif*, special organs of perception: the exalted consciousness and heightened powers to which we referred earlier.

Says Idries Shah:

'The succession of colours seen by the alchemist in Western literature can be seen as referring to concentration

upon certain physical localisations if we compare it with the Sufi literature on exercises.³

The *lataif* colour correspondences are yellow, Mind (*qalb*), left side of the body; red, Spirit (*ruh*), right side of the body; white, Consciousness (*sirr*), solar plexus; black, Intuition (*khafi*), forehead. If these are applied in the usual Western alchemical order - black, white, yellow, red - it will be seen that a movement of the hand to these four physical locations produces the action of crossing oneself. This is not, of course, an exclusively Christian gesture, but a much older mystical practice which designates the correspondences between colours and the location of subtle energy-centres in the body, the traditional quaternary of the four elements, the cardinal points, and the Pythagorean concept of four as the basis of all solid objects. (I use 'Pythagorean' reluctantly here for familiarity's sake; I do not accept the Greeks as originators of advanced mathematical systems, but as initiates of the older Egyptian schools, from whom they have stolen the credit and lime-light.⁴)

In any event, I would advance the suggestion that Trevisan's precise attention to colours in his *Fountain Allegory* - like the archway decoration of Nicholas Flamel in the Cemetery of the Innocents - indicates that, at some stage in his considerable travels, he was initiated by a Sufi teacher or Master.

As in the case of Basil Valentine, little is historically known of the initiate, Trithemius of Sponheim, on the Rhine, except that he lived from 1462 to 1516, studied hypnotism, telepathy, spiritism, angelology, divination, sorcery and alchemy, and was a learned and respected abbot. Tradition says that Johannes Trithemius took shelter in a Benedictine monastery during a snowstorm and was so impressed by the peace, privacy and tranquility of the place that he joined the order and was eventually elevated to abbot.

In a quiet, neglected sort of way, Trithemius had a tremendous influence on subsequently important figures in the history of occultism, including the famous Elizabethan astrologer, mystic and alchemist, Dr. John Dee and his seer,

³ *The Sufis*.

⁴ See my book, *The Ancient Magic of the Pyramids* (Corgi, 1978).

Edward Kelly, or Kelley. Apart from his alchemical work, it seems, Trithemius was an expert on cryptograms and ciphers - an important attribute in unlocking many difficult areas of occult philosophy, including Qabalism, magic and alchemy. In fact, it was through the Abbé's little-known work, *Steganographia*, which Dee discovered in an Antwerp bookshop in 1563, that the astrologer was able to complete in twelve days his *Monas Hieroglyphica*, a volume he had been labouring upon for seven years.

Steganographia was a difficult work which related numbers to systems of natural magic and used symbols and codes which apparently only Dee was able to understand. The statesman Sir William Cecil, with whom Dee corresponded, described the book as 'of the utmost value for the security of the realm,' and it no doubt helped Dee in the intelligence and espionage work he did under Elizabeth I.

A modern historian of magic, D. P. Walker, summed up this work by Trithemius as 'partly a treatise on cryptography in which the methods of encipherment are disguised as demonic magic ...' He added: 'It should be noted that Trithemius' astrological magic is not only a kind of telepathy; *it is also the means of acquiring universal knowledge.*'⁵ (My italics.)

It was through the influence of Trithemius that Dee was also able to develop his own complex system of cryptography, with which modern students of magic are still absorbed and which is regarded as a highly important and effective magical corpus. Only recently, Dr. Donald C. Laycock, Senior Fellow in the Linguistics Department of the Research School of Pacific Studies, Australian National University, has produced *The Complete Enochian Dictionary*.⁶ This is a computer-assisted analysis and concordance of Angelic or Enochian, an actual language which Dee and Kelly claimed was transmitted to them by spiritual intelligences. It has its own grammar and syntax and has defeated all attempts to prove it an 'invented' or concocted pseudo-language.

⁵ *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, (Warburg Institute, 1958.) Note: The first English version of *The Steganographia of Johannes Trithemius* is due to be published in 1980 in a limited edition by Magnum Opus Hermetic Sourceworks, Edinburgh.

⁶ (Askini Publishers Ltd., London, 1979.)

Apart from Dee, Trithemius' other major and direct influence in the field of occultism was upon one of the most famous and enigmatic figures in the history of alchemy and medicine – the man who named himself Paracelsus. Born at Einsiedeln, Switzerland, in 1493, his full name was Phillipus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim. His father was a physician who practised at Villach, in Austria, where Paracelsus grew up.

Like many of his predecessors, Paracelsus did not believe entirely in book-learning and spent most of his short life travelling, gaining knowledge and experience first-hand. 'Magic is a teacher of medicine preferable to all the written books,' he wrote.

He studied first at Basle, then at Würzburg under Trithemius. He named himself after the Roman physician Celsus (25 BC – AD 50). He is believed to have received his medical doctorate at Ferrara, in Italy, around 1515 and then spent the remainder of his life wandering, visiting industrial areas and talking to the common people about their ailments. His travels took him to Italy, Sicily, Spain and Portugal – areas which were still deeply influenced by the great intellectual confluence of Jewish and Sufi masters. It may have been in one of these countries' centres of learning that he gained the incentive eventually to travel to the East, in particular Turkey where, in Constantinople, he was initiated: Idries Shah flatly says as a Sufi; Manly P. Hall says 'into the supreme secrets of alchemy by a college of Islamic savants, who bestowed upon him the Universal Mystery under the symbolism of the Stone Azoth, the "philosophic fire" of the Western adepts.'⁷

Paracelsus spent time in Paris and London (around 1519), Stockholm, Moscow and Greece. For a short time he accepted the appointment of town physician and Professor of Medicine at Basle – a post offered to him as a direct result of a seemingly miraculous cure. Where other local doctors had failed, and could only suggest amputation, Paracelsus succeeded in saving the gangrenous right leg of the famous printer and scholar, Johannes Frobenius.

⁷ *Orders of the Great Work: Alchemy*, (Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, California, 1949.)

Throughout his whole career, however, Paracelsus earned the odium of his fellow medics because of his dogmatic outspokenness, fiery temper and utter disdain for their methods and those of the accepted classical authorities. To their dismay, he also eschewed traditional Latin in favour of the vernacular.

It was at Basle that he is said to have advertised a lecture and then, before the assembled audience of distinguished doctors and scholars, proceeded to burn the works of highly regarded authors such as Galen and Avicenna, in a brass censer. 'Know physicians, my cap has more learning in it than all your heads, my beard has more experience than your whole academies,' he announced. Oddly enough, Paracelsus went clean-shaven, unlike many learned men of his time – an affectation that caused his enemies to claim he had been emasculated as a child.

In his *Paragranum*, he elaborated upon his braggardly speech at Basle: 'Avicenna, Galen, Rhasis, Montagna, and all the rest of you, after me and not I after you! You people from Paris, Montpellier, Swabia, Meissen and half-a-dozen other places, after me and not I after you! Even in the most distant corner there will not be one among you on whom the dogs will not piss. But I will be the king and mine the kingdom.'

Despite the infamy and condemnation that such outbursts engendered, Paracelsus did have something to boast about. Through visiting the mines of Austria, Hungary and Germany, and talking to the common folk and gypsies from whom he learned much about the therapeutic qualities of natural herbs and gained a thorough knowledge of metals, ores and metallurgy, he had the first insights into herbal medicine and industrial diseases which were prevalent in these areas. Paracelsus was not simply interested in alchemical gold-making – he genuinely wanted to relieve humanity of its illnesses and suffering and did so through practical field-work, rather than the slavish book-learning of the academic centres. In keeping with Hermetic Philosophy, he believed that only Nature was the true healer and that all the doctor could do was to encourage this natural process, or accelerate it.

He seems to have possessed genuine thaumaturgic or healing faculties. He believed that man consisted of three essential

factors - body, soul and spirit - which he equated with the philosophical salt, sulphur and mercury of the alchemists. He wrote:

'Know then, that all the seven metals are born from a threefold matter ... Mercury is the spirit, Sulphur is the soul, and Salt is the body ... the soul, which indeed is Sulphur ... unites these two contraries, the body and spirit, and changes them into one essence ...'

Paracelsus called the essence of life 'mumia' and believed that it was possible to make a 'microcosmic magnet' to attract this essence, using natural organic waste materials such as blood, sweat, hair, urine and excrement, since they retained something of this essence. By applying his 'magnets' to the body, he thought it was possible to draw off mumia that had become diseased. After use, the organic 'magnet' was placed in earth and a plant grown in it, into which the diseased mumia would pass. Theoretically, as the plant withered and died, drawing off the mumia, so the patient would recover.

Through his reputation among those he treated - as opposed to that of his detractors and critics - Paracelsus seems to have been highly successful. He was known as a great healer everywhere he wandered.

Paracelsus also worked with actual metallic magnets in some of his treatments - anticipating the work of Franz Mesmer by two centuries. He believed that magnets could adjust or regulate a 'nervous fluid' in the body and is said to have cured hysteria and epilepsy in this way.

Most important, perhaps, Paracelsus initiated the scientific investigation of metallic compounds in medicine - a natural development of the experimental work of Valentine with antimony. Although earlier alchemical writers had turned their attentions to medicine, he was the first in the West to write down his theories and findings on these 'quintessences' - obtained by dissolving metals in chemical reagents.

In *Paracelsus: Selected Writings*, Jolande Jacobi says he is:

'today celebrated as the first modern medical scientist, as the precursor of microchemistry, antiseptics, modern wound

surgery, Homeoeopathy, and a number of other ultra-modern achievements.'⁸

He wrote the first detailed treatise on the causes, symptoms and treatment of syphilis; taught that epilepsy was not madness or demonic possession but a genuine sickness; was the first to identify bronchial complaints in mining communities as an industrial disease; and he studied such therapeutic aspects of medical treatment as natural mineral baths, the importance of fresh air and light in patients' sickrooms, and the necessity for proper surgery instead of the dangerous blood-letting techniques of barber-surgeons.

The question now remains: was he a successful alchemist and did he manufacture the Stone?

The answer would seem to be, yes.

On the authority of Michael Neandor, in his book *Orbis Terrae Partium Succinta Explicatio* (Leipzig, 1586), Paracelsus actually performed a transmutation. Neandor, a contemporary, describes how Paracelsus first heated one pound of mercury in a crucible. Eventually, as the metal began to give off smoke, he produced a piece of wax in which was wrapped a fragment of the powdered Stone, and dropped it into the mercury. He covered the crucible and left it for a half-hour. Then he asked what the substance looked like.

'I answered that it looked yellow, like gold,' Neandor says. 'I took it out and gold it was. He said: "Take it to the goldsmith who lives above the pharmacy and tell him to pay me for it." I did as he said and the goldsmith weighed it. Its weight was a pound minus half an ounce. And he went for money ...'

Using what he described as a Physician's Tincture, Paracelsus claimed to have cured many diseases, including leprosy and dropsy. The tincture was none other than the powdered Stone, the basic life-essence which the alchemists often called 'Azoth.' Its symbol was a red lion and Paracelsus carried a quantity around with him in the hollow spherical pommel of his sword. He is said to have cured dying patients simply by prescribing a minute pinch of the powder. He told one woman to mix it into her husband's warm beer - and the man recovered.

⁸ (Routledge, 1951.)

In *De Tinctura Physicorum*, posthumously published in 1570, Paracelsus revealed:

'This is the tincture by which some of the first physicians in Egypt and afterward up till our times have lived for 150 years. The lives of many of them lasted for some centuries, as history clearly teaches, although this does not seem to be true to anybody; because its force is so miraculous, that it is able to enlighten the body ... and to strengthen him to such a degree that he will remain free of all diseases and, although afflicted by his old age, will appear as he had been in his youth. Therefore the *tinctura physicorum* is a universal remedy which devours all sickness like a fire devouring wood. Its quantity is tiny, but its force is mighty.'

To comprehend Paracelsus' view of alchemy, it is necessary to try to get behind the meanings of the terminology he used, by examining the Arabic root words and their useage. As Idries Shah points out: 'Owing to the Reformation, Paracelsus had to be careful how he expressed himself; since he was projecting a psychological system different from either the Catholic or Protestant ways.'⁹

Paracelsus was besides in sufficient disfavour through his outspokenness and arrogance. It is surprising that his reactionary and establishment 'colleagues' did not conspire to denounce him as a heretic.

One aspect of Paracelsus' life which biographers always mention and yet find puzzling was his reputation as a prodigious drinker. They usually find it difficult to understand how a man who was, according to at least one source, scarcely ever sober, could be so lucid in his writings and so competent as a physician. The secret most probably lies in his use of the Sufic analogy of 'wine' as a synonym for inner wisdom. When he appeared in inns and talked of wine in this way, the uninitiated probably got the impression that he was speaking literally of wine. But, much more likely, he was using wine in the same sense as it is used in the Sufi aphorism: 'Before garden, vine or grape was in the world, our soul was drunken with *immortal wine*.' (My italics.) 'As a result,' says Idries

⁹ Shah, op cit.

Shah, 'he was accused of being a drunkard.'¹⁰

The 'wine' to which Paracelsus frequently referred in fact meant the 'essence' or 'inner reality' - another name for 'azoth', which is derived from the Arabic *el-dhat* or *ez-zat*, which mean the same thing. Shah says:

'The stone, according to the Sufis, is the *dhat*, the essence, which is so powerful that it can transform whatever comes into contact with it. It is the essence of man, which partakes of what people call the divine. It is "sunshine," capable of uplifting humanity to a next stage.'¹¹

Idries Shah carries the interpretation of the alchemical essences in Sufi terms much further, but we shall leave them for the moment. The point is that Paracelsus was in fact yet another wandering initiate, teacher and physician in the true Sufi mould and, like all true Seekers, the manufacture of gold to him was but an effect, a sidelight on the Path, in the same way that the miracles of Christ were merely incidental to his main ministry.

As already indicated, the powder that is used in the process of transmutation can also be used in minute homoeopathic dosages as an elixir. And, since Paracelsus is acknowledged as the originator of homoeopathy and is known to have carried the powder around with him in the handle of his sword, this may have some bearing on his death, which occurred in mysterious circumstances. He died aged only forty-seven, in 1541, at the White Horse Inn in Salzburg. The details of how he died are vague, but there are suggestions that he may have been poisoned by agents of his enemies. But another possibility may be advanced: that he died from an accidental overdose of his own tincture.

The basis of homoeopathy is that the preparation being ingested - whether it is a natural mineral salt or a metallic tincture like 'potable' or drinkable gold - is refined to a highly concentrated degree to increase its potency and then greatly diluted. We have already seen how Paracelsus has referred to the 'miraculous force' of the alchemical tincture and, since he

¹⁰ Shah, op cit.

¹¹ Ibid.

used to carry his red powder around with him, it is possible that he made a mistake in the dosage - and poisoned himself. This hypothesis would, at least, explain why his death came comparatively early, which is otherwise surprising in one so skilful in curing others, and perhaps why it is shrouded in uncertainty and mystery.

'Let us depart from all ceremonies, conjurations, consecrations, etc.,' Paracelsus wrote in his *Philosophia Occulta*, 'and all other similar delusions, and put our heart, will and confidence solely upon the true rock ... If we abandon selfishness, the door will be opened for us, and that which is mysterious will be revealed.'

Alchemy seems to have reached a turning point sometime around 1600. It is almost as if some higher, controlling agency had issued a directive which said, in effect: 'All right, the principles of the work have now been implanted in a succession of Adepts. Some of these remain abroad among men. Let us now show the rest of the uninitiated that we are not working in fables.'

From around that time onwards, practical demonstrations of gold-making seemed to abound - as though such an order had gone out to answer the art's critics and sceptics.

The propaganda campaign seems to have had a fairly loose form, although similar patterns of procedure are detectable. Firstly, in several instances, the alchemist himself would travel about, giving demonstrations. The alchemist, remember, was the man who could *manufacture* the Philosopher's Stone and the powder of projection. After putting on these displays, as if to make good his unmolested escape, or disappearance - a course of action which did not always succeed - he might then hand over some of his powder to an amazed onlooker and allow him to carry out the transmutation. Alternatively, he might entrust some disciple or follower with the powder, without disclosing the secret of its manufacture - and let him spread the word by continued demonstrations.

This policy resulted in two quite distinctive manifestations of the art. One was that the disciple, in confident possession of the precious powder, would turn a pot of mercury into silver here, a crucible of lead into gold there, at the same time often enjoying the patronage of wealthy aristocrats and monarchs.

Eventually, of course, he would discover that he had run out of the miraculous powder. Even if he had not attempted to pass himself off as an Adept, he usually found himself in hot water when he could no longer produce gold to order, or deliver up the secret of the Stone's manufacture.

The other effect was that documented reports of actual transmutations, often confirmed by two or more reliable witnesses, actually passed into historical records in one form or another. And, from an examination of the evidence, it would seem that this was the prime object behind the otherwise inexplicable policy of bringing alchemy at least partially out into the open.

Not all of the Adepts, of course, managed to slope off to some supposed secret retreat to enjoy their assumed near-immortality, but several did effectively vanish - as Fulcanelli did early this century - without visible trace. We will now examine some pertinent examples of this phenomenon.

Alexander Seton, or Sethon, seems to fall into the former category. (He was also variously known as Suchten, Sethonius, Suthoneus, Suethonius, Seethonius, Sidon, Sidonius and even Scotus, the latter presumably because of his supposed Scottish origin.) Seton is believed to have owned a mansion in a seaside village near Edinburgh, possibly Port Seton. In 1601, a Dutch ship was wrecked off the coast and Seton rescued some of the crew, including the vessel's pilot, James Haussen, offered them shelter and helped arrange their homeward passage. The following year Seton went to visit Haussen at his home in Enkhuyzen and, during a stay of several weeks, confided that he was an alchemist and performed a number of transmutations.

Seton then left for Amsterdam but in the meantime, Haussen told a local physician friend named Van der Linden of the operations and presented him with a piece of the alchemical gold which he had seen transmuted on March 13, 1602. The doctor's grandson, Jean-Antoine Van der Linden showed the gold piece to George Morhoff, an acquaintance interested in alchemy, who in turn wrote to the historian, the Abbé Lenglet du Fresnoy. Thus, at an early stage, Seton's work began to pass into historical record. At this point, of course, the 'evidence' was based purely on the say-so of Haussen and the Van der Lindens. But Seton went on to perform more transmutations

on his travels and, each time, seems to have engineered it so that there were independent witnesses, including sceptics who would be almost certain to record what they saw.

From Holland, Seton went on to Italy and Switzerland, where he met Professor Jakob Zwinger of the University of Basle and Professor Wolfgang Dienheim of Fribourg. Dienheim later described 'Alexander Sethonius, a native of the island of the ocean, Molier,' as spiritual in appearance, short and stout, highly coloured and with a beard trimmed in the French style.

Both Zwinger and Dienheim were highly sceptical on the subject of alchemy, but Seton persuaded them to co-operate in a demonstration. Zwinger obtained lead from his own home, a crucible was borrowed from a goldsmith and sulphur was bought en route to the house of a third party where the operation was to take place. Thus the chances of deception were reduced to almost impossibility. Seton touched nothing, but merely supplied a small paper packet containing a pinch of the powder of projection.

When the lead and sulphur had been melted in the crucible, Seton handed one of the professors the packet with its yellowish powder and told him to drop it into the heart of the mixture. Fifteen minutes later, the two doubting academics were staggered as the molten mass in the crucible turned into gold. A jeweller who was called to assay the product declared that it was 'of a purity exceeding Arabian gold.'

'Now where are you with your pedantries,' Seton said. 'You can see the truth by the fact.' He cut off lumps of the gold and gave them to his witnesses as mementoes.

Both Dienheim and Zwinger recorded the success of the operation - the latter in correspondence (*Epistola ad doctorem Schobinger*) which was printed by Emmanuel König in his *Ephemerides*.

Seton travelled on into Germany visiting Strasbourg, Cologne, and Frankfurt, where he sought out souffleurs and sceptics and continued his programme of putting on similar demonstrations to prove the truth of the alchemical art. In Offenbach, a suburb of Frankfurt, he used only one grain of his powder to transform 6oz 3gr. of mercury and potash into the same weight in gold. There were several witnesses, including a

local merchant named Koch. An assayer valued it as genuine 23 carat gold. This operation was recorded by Theobald de Hoghelande in his *Historiae aliquot Transmutationis Metallicae pro defensione Alchemiae contra Hostium Rabrein*, published in Cologne in 1604.

In Cologne itself, Seton made a crucible of gold before five witnesses including an eminent surgeon named Georg. On another occasion he took a pair of pliers from a workman-spectator - and transmuted them into gold.

Seton did transmutations in Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Cologne, Basle and Hamburg.

In fact, the operation became so routine and commonplace for him that, after his marriage to a girl in Munich, rather than interrupt his honeymoon, he sent his servant, William Hamilton, to answer the command of Christian II, Elector of Saxony, who had heard of the famous travelling Scotsman. Hamilton performed the operation before the Elector's entire court and, according to Galdenfolk's *Alchemical Antiquities*, the gold was assayed and found genuine.

Christian II demanded to see Seton in person. The alchemist obliged - and handed over a small amount of his transmutation powder. But when Seton would not tell the Elector the secret of making it, he was immediately imprisoned. The inaptly-named Christian had him pierced with iron spikes, scorched with molten lead, racked, beaten and burned with firebrands. But still Seton would not disclose his secret. He was left in solitary confinement.

Seton was eventually rescued from prison by a Polish-born student and would-be alchemist, Michael Sendivogius, who bribed and got drunk the Scotsman's guards. Seton was carried to a waiting post-chaise - he could no longer walk - and, after picking up his wife, was whisked away to Sendivogius' home in Cracow. Despite the younger man's appeals, Seton would not tell his rescuer the secret of how to manufacture the Stone.

'You can see what I have endured,' he said. 'My nerves are shrunk, my limbs dislocated; I am emaciated to the last extremity, and my body is almost corrupted; even to avoid all this I did not disclose the secrets of philosophy.'

Seton died from his afflictions some months afterwards, on January 1, 1604, and Sendivogius, who was then about thirty-

eight, inherited his powder of projection. He also married Seton's widow in the hope, it is claimed by some writers, that she might disclose the great secret. But she knew nothing. She did, however, have Seton's MS, *The New Light of Alchemy*.

Sendivogius, in possession of Seton's powder, began passing himself off as an adept and eventually published Seton's work at Prague, under the nom-de-plume of *Cosmopolita*. Implying that he was the author, he incorporated his own name in an anagram on the title-page: *Autore me qui DIVI LESCHI GENUS AMO* (I am the author, who love the sacred race of the Lesch, who founded the Polish kingdom.) He later published a second tract on sulphur, again concealing his name in an anagram: *Angelus doce mihi jus* (Angel teach me the right.)

The rest of Sendivogius' career reads like that of a typical uninitiated neophyte. He travelled about performing transmutations with Seton's powder and having lands, property and wealth bestowed upon him by impressionable aristocrats, until the precious powder ran out. Then, unable to restore his supply, he resorted to trickery – by silvering pieces of gold and making it appear to turn into gold using chemical solvents.

Some commentators have suggested that Seton did give Sendivogius the secret of the Stone and that he behaved in this way to protect himself from a similar fate to that of his master. But this is largely based on the word of his confidant, Jean Bodowski, who claimed Sendivogius often travelled disguised as a servant, with the supply of powder secreted in the hollow step of his carriage. (*Vie de Sendivogius, tirée de la Relation de Jean Bodowski*.) In any case, Sendivogius' record is hardly consistent with that of a true Master – trying to pass off another's work as his own, living extravagantly and resorting to fraud. And there is a very interesting development in Sendivogius' later life which almost certainly indicates that he was not an adept. It is said that while at his castle at Groverna, on the frontiers of Poland and Silesia, he was visited by two mysterious strangers. They had apparently heard of his fame as an alchemist and were members of the Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross. They offered to initiate Sendivogius into their fraternity, but he declined.

Had he been even reasonably advanced on the Path and not

simply the lucky inheritor of a Master's powder of projection, it is almost certain that Sendivogius would have responded favourably to an invitation to join the secret fraternity, which might eventually lead to the disclosure of even greater secrets. Instead, he chose to go his own way and died at Parma in 1646, aged eighty-four.

Despite the death of the Master Seton, at least one adept remained operative in Europe – and America – during the 17th century. And, when all the evidence is examined, the signs are that this one man was continuing the 'invisible directive' of promoting the reality of transmutation.

His name, birthdate, birthplace and time of death are unknown, but all the indications are that he was one of the Higher Initiates of the great alchemical tradition who appear in society perhaps once a century. Most commonly, he is known to alchemical historians as Eirenaeus Philalethes.

But first, let us demolish the most frequent misidentification of this Adept. As Jacques Sadoul has so carefully shown, Eirenaeus Philalethes was not the Welsh-born cleric, alchemical author Thomas Vaughan, brother of the mystical poet Henry. Thomas Vaughan, says Sadoul, died in 1666 – 'well before the final "disappearance" of Philalethes.'¹²

A. E. Waite puts Vaughan's death a year earlier, on February 27, 1665, and says that one of his chemical experiments killed him, while Mary Anne Atwood claims he actually died of an overdose of the Elixir. The identification of Vaughan with the great wandering adept undoubtedly arose because he wrote under the similar-sounding alchemical pseudonym of *Eugenius*, as opposed to Eirenaeus, Philalethes. Vaughan was educated at Jesus College, Oxford, and was vicar of St. Bridget's in Llansaintfraid, Breconshire.

Having disposed of Vaughan, let us now return to the 'Real Philalethes', as Sadoul has chosen to call the unknown adept. Many writers have said Philalethes was born in 1612, mainly because in his most famous work, *An Open Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King*, published in 1645, he says: 'I am a philosopher, an Adept, who call myself by no other name than Philalethes, an anonymous name signifying *lover of truth*. In

¹² *Alchemists & Gold* (Neville Spearman, 1972.)

the year of the redemption of the world, 1645, being then thirty-three years of age ...'

A quick calculation, therefore, gives Philalethes' birthdate as 1612. But 'lover of truth' or not, it is possible that Philalethes was telling a white lie here. For one thing, as Sadoul points out, original editions of the book had 'twenty-three' and not 'thirty-three', which would bring Philalethes' birthdate forward to 1622. But the French author also rightly speculates that this might have been changed by the publishers in subsequent editions because they simply did not believe such a young man capable of being an adept.

Philalethes could hardly have made the correction himself, Sadoul says, because by the time of publication of the later editions, the master had well and truly disappeared.

What is really interesting about Sadoul's analysis of the problem is his suggestion that the age may not have been literally meant at all. If it were twenty-three, he says, the figure might simply refer to the length of time it took Philalethes to perfect the Great Work. If thirty-three, it might, since the author was known to be a Christian mystic, be an initiatory figure symbolising his attainment, in the same way that Christ can be said to have achieved perfection in the fulfilment of his earthly mission at the age of 33. This speculation becomes even more acceptable when it is known that Philalethes' philosophical outlook, contained in his writings, is very similar to that of the Rosicrucians who, like the Freemasons, had a system of degrees signifying the advancement of each of the Brethren. And both these semi-secret, mystical fraternities, remember, have been shown to have derived from the Sufi Order of the Builders, with its numerologically significant interpretation of 33.

Citing an English biographer, Sadoul eventually settles for the reign of Charles I - 'say between 1625 and 1649' - as the period during which Philalethes most probably grew up.

One highly important detail upon which most historians agree about Philalethes is that his transmutation powder seems to have been infinitely more potent than any previously recorded. The alchemical historian Louis Figuier says: 'A single grain added to an ounce of mercury turned it into gold; and if this transmuted gold was added to ten times its own bulk

of mercury, a tincture resulted that would transmute 19,000 parts of metal.'¹³

In 1618, the famous Belgian chemical pioneer Jean-Baptiste Van Helmont, was working in his castle at Vilvorde when he was visited by a stranger. Van Helmont, an out-and-out sceptic so far as alchemy was concerned, protested when the visitor began to talk of transmutation as if it were a foregone conclusion. After all, Van Helmont was an extremely well-qualified researcher who had studied mathematics and medicine at Louvain, gained his medical doctorate at twenty-two, and had read Hippocrates and the classic Greek and Arabian authors before that age. The stranger gave him a few grains of powder.

'It was like saffron in colour,' Van Helmont wrote later in his *De Vita Eterna*, 'but heavy and shining like pounded glass.' After giving him instructions, the stranger made to leave. When Van Helmont asked if he were not interested in the outcome of the experiment, the visitor replied that it was not necessary - he knew the operation would be a success. As he left, Van Helmont asked why he in particular had been chosen to do the experiment. 'To convince an illustrious scientist, whose work is an honour to his country,' came the reply.

Van Helmont applied a pinch of the powder to eight ounces of mercury in a heated crucible. The metal turned to gold within fifteen minutes. From that time on, Van Helmont became a firm believer in alchemy, although he never perfected the Stone himself.

'I have seen the Stone and handled it, and have projected the fourth part of one grain, wrapped in paper, upon eight ounces of quicksilver boiling in a crucible, and the quicksilver, with a small voice, presently stood still from its flux, and was congealed like to yellow wax; and after a flux by blast we found eight ounces all but eleven grains which were wanting of the purest gold; therefore one grain of this powder would transmute 19,186 parts of quicksilver into the best gold ... He who gave me that powder had so much as would transmute two hundred thousand pounds' worth of gold ...'

¹³ *Alchemy and the Alchemists*, 1856; quoted by Sadoul, op cit.

No other adept but the elusive Philalethes was known to have powder of such potency. It is almost certain that it was he who called on Van Helmont.

Even more certain that they were in the presence of this adept were the Starkeys, an English father and son who had emigrated to America early in the 17th century. Sometime around 1650, they took in a lodger at their apothecary's business. The visitor spoke with an English accent and gave his name as John Smith. During his stay, 'Smith' asked if he could use Starkey Senior's dispensary behind the tiny shop. Starkey agreed but asked his son George to keep an eye on the curious lodger. George peeped through a chink in a partition.

He saw 'Smith' melt lead in a crucible and then drop in a reddish powder. Fifteen minutes later, he poured the molten mass into a mould and young Starkey was staggered to see that the entire amount of metal had turned into gold.

The alchemist, still with his back to George's vantage-point, called out to him: 'Why don't you come in if you're so interested?' George tottered in and was given a quick run-down on the rudiments of alchemy.

Naturally, Starkey and his son pestered their lodger - who admitted that he also went by the name of Philalethes - to teach them the secret. But, perhaps predictably, the alchemist went out one day and never returned. When they got back to England in 1664, George Starkey wrote an introduction to Philalethes' *Marrow of Alchemy*.

According to Jacques Sadoul, there is no doubt that Philalethes was in America. Dr. Michael Faustius, who published a collection of the alchemist's works, was in touch with people other than the Starkeys who had encountered Philalethes in America, or who had been in correspondence with him. Among them was the famous pioneer of modern chemistry, Robert Boyle. Sir Isaac Newton also studied Philalethes' work seriously - a copy of *The Open Entrance* in the British Museum is annotated on every page and crammed with loose sheets of commentary, all in Newton's handwriting. Sadoul says Newton and Boyle became so convinced of the feasibility of alchemy that they tried to introduce a Parliamentary Bill aimed at prohibiting disclosure of the process, for fear of its effect on the gold market.

The interlude with the Starkeys seems to be typical of the wandering alchemist's life. He travelled about putting on demonstrations of gold-making and, when he ran out of funds, would pause to manufacture more of the precious metal, which he would sell. In his writings, Philalethes himself complains of the life which the mantle of adept has forced him to lead and he expresses the hope that one day gold will be as common as dirt, so that men would be drawn to the alchemical art not by greed but by a hunger for inner truth. He also speaks of the gradually increasing difficulty of selling alchemical gold and silver without arousing suspicion.

Once when he tried to sell an ingot of alchemical silver worth about £600, he says, the merchant became suspicious and 'I departed without saying another word, leaving my silver and any money I expected to have got for it. And I never went back or tried again.'

In 1666, Philalethes was in Amsterdam, where he gave the English MS of *An Open Entrance* to a publisher for translation into Latin. Significantly, this was also the year in which the famous Dutch physician and alchemical sceptic Johann Friedrich Schweitzer, better known as Helvetius, was visited by a mysterious alchemist, at his home in The Hague. The stranger, who called himself Elias the Artist, called on Helvetius twice in three weeks and on the second occasion gave him a tiny fragment of the Stone. He promised to return again, but when he didn't, Helvetius was persuaded by his wife to try a transmutation.

Helvetius melted lead in a crucible and his wife dropped in the Stone, encased in a pellet of beeswax. Helvetius recalled:

'As soon as it was melted, there was a hissing sound and a slight effervescence, and after quarter of an hour I found that the whole mass had been turned into the finest gold. Before this transformation took place, the compound became intensely green, but as soon as I had poured it into the melting pot it assumed a hue like blood. When it cooled, it glittered and shone like gold.'

A goldsmith offered him fifty florins per ounce for the precious metal. An official of the Dutch Mint named Parelius and a second goldsmith named Brechtel made independent

assays of the gold and confirmed that it was genuine. Even the great philosopher Spinoza called on Helvetius to investigate and declared himself convinced. Spinoza, who happened to be in The Hague at the time, interviewed the goldsmith Brechtel and in the following year confirmed in a letter to his friend Jarrig Jellis that not only had the gold been pronounced genuine, but it had, during the assaying process, actually transmuted a portion of silver which was mixed into the solvent nitric acid.

'After that I went to see Helvetius himself,' Spinoza wrote, 'who showed me the gold and the crucible, that still had some traces of gold on the inner surface. He told me that he had used a piece of the Philosopher's Stone about a quarter the size of a grain of wheat in the melted lead, and added that he was going to tell everyone in the world about it. Apparently the Adept from whom he got it had already done the same sort of thing in Amsterdam, where in fact he was still to be found. This is all the information I was able to get on the subject.'

Again, another group of respected sceptics had been persuaded to spread the word and place on record the reality of alchemical transmutation. And, as in the case of Van Helmont, the operator himself had only the powder - not the means of manufacturing it.

But the intriguing thing about the Helvetius case is the reference to 'Elias the Artist.' Who was he? Could he have been Philalethes himself? As Jacques Sadoul so rightly observes, it is unlikely that there was more than one successful adept in Europe at the time in possession of such a highly potent powder. For Helvetius' visitor had told him he had enough of it in a small ivory box he carried to transmute 40,000 pounds of base metal into gold.

The advent of this 'Elias Artista' had in fact been predicted by Paracelsus himself. And, as A. E. Waite has pointed out, alchemists of the 17th century looked forward eagerly to the coming of this unknown master.¹⁴ Some had even begun to believe that Paracelsus himself had been Elias.

In his *Book Concerning the Tincture of Philosophers*, Para-

¹⁴ *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*, (University Books, New Jersey, 1973.)

celsus had written: 'Nothing is concealed that shall not be revealed. There are many more secrets concerning the transmutation, though they are little known, for if they are revealed to someone their fame is not immediately common. With this art, the Lord bestows the wisdom to keep it secret until the advent of Elias Artista. Then shall be revealed what has been concealed.'

In another place, while discussing vitriol, Paracelsus said: 'What is small and humble, God has revealed, but the more important is still in the dark and shall likely remain so until the arrival of Elias Artista.'

He also said: 'One shall come after me whose splendour is not yet in this life and who shall reveal much.'

Philalethes, without suggesting that he was himself Elias, actually hinted that the expected Master was already among mankind. In Chapter XIII of *An Open Entrance*, he said: 'The time has arrived when we may speak more freely about the Art. For Elias the Artist is at hand, and glorious things are already spoken of the City of God. I possess wealth sufficient to buy the whole world - but as yet I may not use it on account of the craft and cruelty of wicked men ...'

'My book is the precursor of Elias, designed to prepare the Royal way of the Master ...'¹⁵

The real significance of the mysterious Elias is given in an almost throwaway phrase by A. E. Waite in *The Brotherhood of the Rosy Cross*. He says: 'I infer that enthusiasts [i.e. those who looked forward to the coming of Elias] regarded it as a corporate Elias.' In other words, Elias was the symbolic figurehead of the new school of alchemy whose adepts were now proving its reality among mankind. The name Elias was aptly chosen, too, because Elias is, of course, in the Authorized Version of The Bible, the same as Elijah, the powerful magician-prophet of Tishpeh, who during his solitary self-enlightenment in a cave, was fed by ravens. The black raven or crow was the symbol chosen by many alchemical writers to indicate the volatile nature of first matter in its *nigredo* or state

¹⁵ *An Open Entrance to the Closed Palace of the King*, in *The Hermetic Museum*, ed. A. E. Waite, (J. Elliott & Co., London, 1893; Samuel Weiser, New York, 1974, 2 vols.)

of putrefaction at the beginning of the Work. Elijah did not die, but was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire, after symbolically casting his mantle upon his successor, Elisha. Fix the volatile and make volatile the fixed, say the alchemists ...

A better legendary personification of the transmission process of the Adepts, therefore, could hardly have been found, especially with its associations of immortality, of achieving oneness with the Godhead, instead of death.

Following the lead of Paracelsus, whom the contemporary French occultist and Rosicrucian Dr. Serge Hutin says was 'beyond question' a Rosicrucian himself, the Brethren of the Rosy Cross took up the theme of Elias as the expected prophet of the Universal Reformation. Another who recognised the significance of the Elias figurehead, was the alchemist Johann Rudolf Glauber (1604-1668).

'This Elias Artista shall restore the true spagyric medicine of the old Egyptian philosophy which was lost over a thousand years,' he wrote. 'He shall bring it with him and show it to the world.'

This was, of course, roughly what was happening in the 17th century, with the adept Philalethes, and Seton before him, travelling about proving the reality of alchemy by putting on public demonstrations of gold-making. The process gave a boost to alchemy by renewing the interest in the art of great scientific spirits of the age - Van Helmont, Helvetius, Boyle and Newton.

There is no record of the death of Philalethes, he simply faded from the scene, as if his mission had been fulfilled, or perhaps, because he had made so many fleeting public appearances that his own safety was in jeopardy. But the promotional policy of the invisible directive had not quite run its course.

As Elisha took on the mantle of Elijah, so the adept Lascaris assumed the evangelical mission carried out by Philalethes. Like his predecessor, absolutely nothing definite is known of the origin and true identity of this alchemist, although he was said to claim an Oriental background and, because he spoke fluent Greek, was sometimes assumed to have been descended from the royal house of Lascaris.

A. E. Waite says he represented himself as the archimandrite

of a convent in the Island of Mytilena, and bore letters from the Greek patriarch of Constantinople. Sadoul says he appeared towards the end of the 17th century and was around during the first thirty to forty years of the 18th.

Like Philalethes and Seton, and even more so, he seems to have favoured a policy of allowing others to perform transmutations simply by handing over to them a portion of the powder of projection.

A contemporary chemist, Councillor Konrad Dippel, who seems to have made a personal study of Lascaris by tracking him down wherever possible all over Europe, described him as a man aged between 40 and 50 - which was exactly the way he was still being described on his last appearances thirty years later, around 1730.

He is first heard of at the beginning of the 18th century in Berlin, when he sent for an apothecary because he was (or pretended to be) ill. The chemist sent a young assistant instead and Lascaris got him into conversation. It emerged that the young man, John Frederick Böttger, was a keen student of alchemy, had studied the works of Basil Valentine and tried experiments, but without success. On leaving Berlin, Lascaris gave Böttger a quantity of powder, charging him to be silent as to where he got it and commanding him not to use it until he had left the city. When unbelievers observed its effects, he said, they would no longer be able to accuse alchemists of madness.

Böttger told his employer he was quitting to take up alchemy and when the man protested that it was an unworthy, impossible pursuit, Böttger quickly astounded him by transmuting silver into gold with Lascaris' powder. He repeated the experiment with mercury before a friend and word soon spread about these marvels.

Like others before him, Böttger became intoxicated with his own fame and began to boast that he could prepare the philosophical catalyst himself. He was summoned before King Frederick William I, but fled to the home of an uncle at Wittenburg. He found sanctuary at the court of the Elector of Saxony, Augustus II, King of Poland, and, when he performed a transmutation for the king, was created a baron on the spot. He lived in luxury and extravagance until his powder ran out, when Augustus had him placed under house arrest.

Lascaris heard of Böttger's plight and tried to pull off his release through an intermediary named Dr. Pasch. But, through the interference of relatives, Pasch's escape plan went wrong and ended in his own imprisonment. Böttger, meanwhile, was encouraged by the Commandant of Königston Castle prison, Count Tschirnhaus, to experiment in pottery and eventually discovered a formula for red and white porcelain, which made him rich and secured his release. He died at thirty-seven due to his extravagant over-indulgence.

Lascaris passed on his powder to two other apothecaries' assistants - Hermann Braun, of Frankfurt-am-Main, and a young man named Martin. Braun performed a number of transmutations before witnesses until his powder was exhausted, while Martin squandered most of his on transmutations to amuse his girl-friends, and experiments in which he mixed the powder with other substances out of sheer curiosity.

Lascaris performed two transmutations in a blacksmith's forge in Bohemia, before a Councillor Liebknecht. The three crucibles used are said to be still at the University of Jena. His influence was evident again in Amsterdam where the inquisitive Councillor Dippel found a man able to perform transmutations with a powder given to him, he said, by an adept who fitted Lascaris' description.

Lascaris was next heard of in 1715 in Hamburg, where he left behind a tiny box of powder at the home of Baron von Creuz, who complained of being laughed at for his lack of success, after thirty years of alchemical experiment. The powder, needless to say, was effective enough to silence the mockery of the baron's family and friends.

Lascaris turned up again in July, 1716, in Vienna, and transmuted a number of copper coins into silver in an experiment set up before eminent doctors and scientists. The event was recorded by Councillor Wolf-Philip Pantzer of Hesse, and his report was signed by half-a-dozen witnesses, including high ranking officials of the Bohemian and Prussian courts. Lascaris himself did not appear at the operation - an intermediary apparently brought the powder.

The detective work of the chemist Councillor Dippel led him to Frankfurt-am-Main, where he met Schmolz von Dierbach, who had been given powder by the adept Lascaris,

after he sympathised with the lieutenant after overhearing his fellow officers of the Polish Army mocking his father, who had turned himself through vain alchemical experiments. The two men compared notes - and Dippel decided that Lascaris fitted von Dierbach's description. Dippel examined some of the powder under a microscope and noted that it was composed of tiny, reddish-orange crystals, but he was unable to analyse it. Tests showed that one part of the powder would transmute at least 600 parts of base metal into gold. After seven years, von Dierbach's powder supply - which he used simply to prove the reality of alchemy, giving away most of the gold he made - was exhausted.

The last recorded appearance of Lascaris was around 1733, when he sought refuge at the home of Countess Anna-Sophia von Erbach. He was on the run from the Elector Palatine's men. To thank the Countess for her hospitality, he turned all her silverware into gold - and disappeared. Her estranged husband tried to claim half the gold as his own at Leipzig in 1733, but lost his case.

VI

The Man Who Does Not Die

During the last quarter of every hundred years an attempt is made by those Masters of whom I have spoken, to help on the spiritual progress of Humanity. Towards the close of each century you will invariably find that an outpouring or upheaval of spirituality – or call it mysticism if you prefer – has taken place. Some one or more persons have appeared in the world as their agents, and a greater or less amount of occult knowledge or teaching has been given out.

– H. P. Blavatsky: *The Key To Theosophy*,
(Theosophical Publishing House, 1889).

AFTER THE SUDDEN flurry of activity in the 16th and 17th centuries, which excited the interest of men like Newton and Boyle, the furious bubbling of the alchemical crucible seems to have simmered in the 18th century. There is no doubt that, spurred on by the apparent marvels of Seton, Philalethes and Lascaris, hundreds upon hundreds of amateurs or souffleurs plunged their entire energies – and finances – into trying to make gold. But the real secret of alchemy – how to produce the Stone which makes gold – remained well out of their grasp. With one or two shadowy exceptions, it seemed as if the Adepts who possessed the crucial ethos of the Hermetic art had gone underground.

If the open demonstrations of the previous two centuries were indeed a response to a directive from the invisible High Command, then the years which followed can only be described as a proscription of alchemical hyperactivity.

It is true that the 18th century cast up some intriguing and mysterious figures like Casanova, Cagliostro and the Comte de Saint-Germain, while secret societies of Rosicrucians, Templars,

Freemasons and Illuminati flourished in almost all the major cultural centres. But hardly anywhere were there to be found wandering Adepts, flickering in and out of the public eye like phantoms, as if intent on turning all the world's base metal into gold and the sceptical men of science into believers in one fell swoop.

Yet there is plenty of suggestive evidence that, although he did not work in the direct propagandist style of his predecessors, the Comte de Saint-Germain was an Adept in possession of the Philosopher's Stone. His apparent immunity to the ageing process, his alleged ability to perfect flawed or inferior precious stones, and his habit of popping up over an extremely long period like some real-life Dorian Gray, bear all the hallmarks of an Initiate.

Judging from the fragmentary and disjointed records of him, the Count moved from place to place in 18th century Europe with the distinct air of a man of definite purpose. But whatever his mission may have been, it was certainly not merely that of persuading unbelievers of the reality of transmutation. Nonetheless, his story deserves some detailed examination here, because he seems almost a prototype of the man with whom this book is ultimately concerned: Fulcanelli.

Saint-Germain is described by different contemporaries and later commentators as having descended from a number of people of both high and low status. He is said variously to have been the son of the widow of Charles II of Spain, fathered by a Madrid banker; the son of a Jew, either of Portugal or Alsace; the bastard of a Rotondo tax-collector, or of the King of Portugal, or the legitimate son of Prince Franz-Leopold Ragoczy of Transylvania.

Between 1710 and 1822, he is said to have appeared in different places under numerous aliases: the Marquis de Montferrat, the Comte Bellamare, or Aymar (Venice); Chevalier Schoening (Pisa); Chevalier Weldon or Welldone (Milan and Leipzig); Comte Soltikoff (Genoa and Leghorn); Graf Tzarogy, a partial anagram of Ragoczy (Schwalbach and Triesdorf); Prince Ragoczy (Dresden), and the Comte de Saint-Germain (Paris, The Hague, London and St. Petersburg.)

His most complete biographer, Isabel Cooper-Oakley, believed that he was most likely the son of Prince Franz-

Leopold Ragoczy of Transylvania.¹ According to Prince Karl of Hesse, in his *Memoires de Mon Temps*, published at Copenhagen in 1861, Saint-Germain himself admitted that he was Prince Ragoczy's son by his first wife, a Tékéli. While still quite young, the Count told Prince Karl, he had been placed under the guardianship of the last Duc de Medici, Gian Gastone, and Prince Karl affirmed from an independent source that Saint-Germain was 'tremendously protected by the Duc de Medici.'

Apparently, the Ragoczy family's principality was gradually encroached upon by the expanding Austrian Empire. Before his death in Rodosto, Turkey, in 1734, Saint-Germain's father made provision for the rest of his family through various property investments bestowed upon him by Louis XIV of France.

Saint-Germain said that when he heard that his two brothers, sons of the Princess of Hess-Wahnfried, had been put under the care of the Emperor Charles VI and had received the titles of St. Karl and St. Elizabeth (sic), he declared: 'Very well, I will call myself Sanctus-Germano, the Holy Brother.'

Saint-Germain was supposed to have been born in 1710 and yet, according to two different sources, he is said to have been seen in Venice that year and appeared between forty-five and fifty. One, the Baron E. H. de Gleichen, said: 'I have known Rameau and an old relative of a French ambassador at Venice testify to having known M. de Saint-Germain in 1710, when he had the appearance of a man of fifty years of age.' The other, the Countess v. Georgy, involves a much-quoted anecdote of meeting the Count at the French Royal Court and asking if his father had been in Venice about 1710.

'No, Madame,' the Count replied, 'it is very much longer since I lost my father; but I myself was living in Venice at the end of the last and the beginning of this century; I had the honour to pay you court then, and you were kind enough to admire a few Barcarolles of my composing which we used to sing together.'

'Forgive me, but that is impossible,' the Countess said, 'the

¹ *The Count of Saint-Germain*, limited edition, Milan, 1912. Mrs. Cooper-Oakley was a Theosophist and a member of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn.

Comte de Saint-Germain I knew in those days was at least forty five years old, and you, at the outside, are that age at present.'

The Count smiled and replied: 'Madame, I am very old.'

'But then you must be nearly 100 years old.'

'That is not impossible,' Saint-Germain said, and then began to recall intimate details of their acquaintance in Venice - much to the embarrassment of the Countess. This appeared in *Chroniques de l'Oeil de Boeuf*, by the widowed Countess v. B—, which, although not published until 1750, related to events in 1723.

Another attestation of the Count's mysterious charisma and talents was in a letter from the Graf Karl Cobenzl to Prince Kaunitz, Prime Minister of Austria, datelined Brussels, April 8, 1763:

'It was about three months ago that the person known by the name of the Comte de Saint-Germain passed this way, and came to see me. I found him the most singular man that I ever saw in my life. I do not yet precisely know his birth; I believe, however, that he is the son of a clandestine union in a powerful and illustrious family. Possessing great wealth, he lives in the greatest simplicity; he knows everything, and shows an uprightness, a goodness of soul, worthy of admiration. Among a number of his accomplishments, he made, under my own eyes, some experiments, of which the most important were the transmutations of iron into a metal as beautiful as gold, and at least as good for all goldsmith's work; the dyeing and preparation of skins, carried to a perfection which surpassed all the moroccos in the world, and the most perfect tanning; the dyeing of silks, carried to a perfection hitherto unknown; the like dyeing of woollens; the dyeing of wood in the most brilliant colours penetrating through and through, and the whole without indigo or cochineal, with the commonest ingredients, and consequently at a very moderate price; the composition of colours for painting, ultra-marine is as perfect as is made from lapis lazuli; and finally, removing the smell from painting oils, and making the best oil of Provence from the oils of Navette, of Colsat, and from others, even the worst. I have

in my hands all these productions, made under my own eyes; I have had them undergo the most strict examinations, and seeing in these articles a profit which might mount up to millions, I have endeavoured to take advantage of the friendship that this man has felt for me, and to learn from him all these secrets. He has given them to me, and he asks nothing for himself beyond a payment proportionate to the profits that may accrue from them, it being understood that this shall be only when the profit has been made ...'²

The Count was described as a man of medium height, well-proportioned, dark-haired but often powdered, and with a swarthy complexion but regular and pleasant features. (See Fig. 9) He usually dressed simply in black, well-fitting, good quality clothes. This he offset by wearing large diamonds in his rings, watch-and-chain, snuffbox and shoe buckles. A jeweller is once said to have valued his shoe-buckles alone at 200,000 francs.



Fig. 7. The Comte de Saint-Germain.

He is said to have kept to a strict diet, although exactly what this constituted cannot be determined, as he always dined alone. But it is known that he never touched meat or wine.

Among Saint-Germain's other notable accomplishments were that he was a versatile musician, composer and artist, who was said to create dazzlingly lustrous effects whenever he

² A. Ritter von Arneth: *Graf Philipp Cobenzl und Seine Memoiren*, (Wien, 1885.)

portrayed subjects wearing jewellery, by mixing powdered mother-of-pearl with his pigments. He was also a great linguist and is said to have spoken German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, English, Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese and French with a Piedmontese accent. He had an acute memory and so fine a knowledge of history that when he spoke of historical events he did so in such detail that his listeners might be led to believe he had actually been present.

This faculty was seized upon by Saint-Germain's enemies at the French court in an attempt to ridicule him. The politically conniving and insecure Duc de Choiseul hired a noted wag named Gauve, who resembled the Count slightly, to impersonate him during his absences from France. It was this operator who gave rise to the many subsequent wild stories in which Saint-Germain is said to have claimed he was a wedding guest at Cana when Christ turned water into wine, or to have been a personal acquaintance of Cleopatra. It was Gauve also who hired a manservant who, when questioned by his bogus master about some incident in the remote past, would answer: 'You forget, sir, that I have been in your service for only five hundred years.'

A man who, like Saint-Germain, apparently enjoyed the confidence of crowned heads in so many European capitals, would be bound to acquire jealous enemies. He travelled widely, often carrying out diplomatic and intelligence missions, and his main movements may be tabulated as follows:

He was in Russia periodically during the reign of Peter III (1728-62); between 1737 and 1742 he was a guest of the Shah of Persia; in 1745 he met Horace Walpole on a peace-making mission to England (which failed, due to the intervention of Choiseul); he is supposed to have met Clive in India in 1756 and in 1789 he was said by the Countess d'Adhémar to have been in Paris.

On his travels, Saint-Germain appears to have taken a great deal of interest in the activities of the Rosicrucian, Masonic and other mystical groups operating in various centres. Several writers, notably Masonic historians, have attempted to deny that Saint-Germain was ever officially accepted or recognised by Masonry. But one can only presume that this was either because of his association with the somewhat suspect and

ultimately discredited Cagliostro, or because of the kind of inter-territorial refusal to acknowledge other Lodges, which has long been a bugbear of secret societies. Nonetheless there are many documented proofs that Saint-Germain was a Freemason and a Rosicrucian. And the inference seems to be that his contact with these groups formed part of his unknown mission – possibly of trying to cement relations between them and, through them, ultimately to bring about the peace of nations.

According to Isabel Cooper-Oakley, the Herzog Karl August questioned the Landgraf Karl von Hessen-Phillips-Barchfeld about Saint-Germain, and was told: 'My cousin, the Landgraf Karl von Hessen is much attached to him; they are eager Freemasons, and work together at all sorts of hidden arts ...'³

Similarly, N. Deschamps, in *Les Sociétés Secrètes et la Société ou Philosophie de l'Histoire Contemporaine*, (Paris, 1881) mentions that Saint-Germain was not only a Templar, but initiated the Count de Cagliostro using a Knights Templar ceremony.

And in 1785 – a year after the Count's supposed death at Eckernförde – there are records of his having attended at least two major Freemasonic and Rosicrucian conferences, one at Paris, the other at Wilhelmsbad. The *Freimaurer Brüderschaft in Frankreich* (Latonia, vol. ii) says: 'Among the Freemasons invited to the great conference at Wilhelmsbad 15th February, 1785, we find Saint-Germain included with St. Martin and many others.' The Milan Librarian Cesare Cantù, in *Gli Eretici d'Italia* (vol. iii, Turin, 1867), recorded: 'And when, in order to bring about a conciliation between the various sects of the Rosicrucians, the Necromantists, the Cabalists, the Illuminati, the Humanitarians, there was held a great congress at Wilhelmsbad, then in the Lodge of the "Amici riuniti", there was also Cagliostro, with St. Martin, Mesmer and Saint-Germain.'

The reference to Saint-Germain's attendance at the Paris conference of French Masons, meanwhile, is by Dr. E. E.

³ Quoted by Mrs. Cooper-Oakley from A. Akasof: *Psychische Studien* (Leipzig, 1885).

Eckert, in *Magazin der Bewiesführer für Verurtheilung des Frei-maurer-Ordens*, of 1857.

Some commentators on the Saint-Germain literature have dismissed either as pure fiction or as apocryphal the account of the Adept given by the Countess d'Adhémar in her *Souvenirs de Marie-Antoinette, Archiduchesse d'Autriche, Reine de France, et sur la Cour de Versaille*. These memoirs cover the years 1760-1821 and were published in four volumes in Paris in 1836.

Jacques Sadoul calls them 'apocryphal' because he says that the Countess was not at court until after Saint-Germain had left Paris, while E. M. Butler, in *The Myth of the Magus*, regards them as pure fiction, invented by a 'senile old woman.'

Yet when the career of Saint-Germain is examined carefully, along with his movements, the diaries of the Countess begin to make sense and do not appear to fit into either category. For one thing, Saint-Germain, as was the custom of many noble persons and diplomats of the 18th and 19th centuries, often travelled incognito. So no one can state with absolute certainty whether he was away from Paris at any given time. Besides, the account of the Countess d'Adhémar certainly does not read like fiction, nor like senile ravings.

Isabel Cooper-Oakley, who traced descendants of the d'Adhémar family, says: '... the most interesting and important work done by M. de Saint-Germain, lies buried in the secret archives of many princely and noble families.' She also notes, interestingly, that Madame H. P. Blavatsky stayed at the Chateau d'Adhémar in 1884, and that 'documents concerning the Comte de Saint-Germain are in their family papers.' It may also be significant that, following the visit of H. P. B., the Theosophical Society adopted Saint-Germain as one of its Hidden Masters.

According to one source, Karl of Hesse, who was latterly Saint-Germain's host and protector, 'burned all his papers for fear of them being misinterpreted, after his "death" in 1784.' And a fire which broke out in the Hotel de Ville in Paris in 1891 destroyed the records of a commission, set up by Napoleon III, to investigate the Count.⁴ Significantly, it was this hotel in

⁴ James Webb, article in *Man, Myth & Magic* (Purnell, 1970-72).

which rents were invested by order of Louis XIV when he bought landed property to provide for Prince Ragoczy's heirs.

But now let us see what the Countess d'Adhémar had to say about the mysterious Count. According to her, Saint-Germain tried to warn Louis XVI and Marie-Antoinette of the impending Revolution and overthrow of the monarchy, via anonymous letters to the Queen and through messages passed on by the Countess herself. At length, he made an attempt to see the king personally.

On his first, tentative audience with only the Queen, Saint-Germain declared: 'Some years yet will pass by in a deceitful calm; then from all parts of the kingdom will spring up men greedy for vengeance, for power, and for money; they will overthrow all in their way. The seditious populace and some great members of the State will lend them support; a spirit of delirium will take possession of the citizens; civil war will burst out with all its horrors; it will bring in its train murder, pillage, exile. Then it will be regretted that I was not listened to; perhaps I shall be asked for again, but the time will be past ... the storm will have swept all before it.'

Saint-Germain wanted to see the king alone - not in the presence of his Prime Minister, the Comte de Maurepas, who was his enemy. Saint-Germain correctly predicted to the Countess d'Adhémar that when de Maurepas learned of his presence at court, he would intervene and try to have him arrested. Maurepas turned up at the Countess' home and confirmed his intentions. Suddenly, Saint-Germain entered and said:

'M. Le Comte de Maurepas, the King summoned you to give him good advice and you think only of maintaining your own authority. In opposing yourself to my seeing the Monarch, you are losing the monarchy, for *I have but a limited time to give to France*, and, this time over, I shall not be seen here again until after three consecutive generations have gone down to the grave. I told the Queen *all that I was permitted to tell her*; my revelations to the King would have been more complete; it is unfortunate that you should have intervened between His Majesty and me. I shall have nothing to reproach myself with when horrible anarchy

devastates all France. As to these other calamities, you will not see them, but to have prepared them will be sufficient memorial of you ...' (My italics.)

Before Maurepas could reply, Saint-Germain went out. A search was made but he could not be found.

According to the Countess, the Queen later expressed regret at not having heeded Saint-Germain's warnings. She also continued to receive further anonymous letters from him.

The Countess d'Adhémar met Saint-Germain again clandestinely in the Recollets church in 1788. He said he had been in China and Japan, but the Countess noted that he looked no older than when she last saw him. Talking once more of the impending doom of the monarchy and aristocracy, he said:

'I have written it to you, I can do nothing, *my hands are tied by one stronger than myself*. There are periods of time when to retreat is impossible, others when He has pronounced and the decree will be executed. *Into this we are entering*.' (My italics.)

When the Countess asked if she would see him again, he said she would - five times. 'Do not wish for the sixth,' he added. He said he was going to Sweden where 'a great crime is brewing ... I am going to try to prevent it.'

The Count left the church but when she questioned her retainer who was waiting outside, the man told the Countess he had not seen Saint-Germain leave.

The Countess said she did see Saint-Germain five more times, as predicted: on the execution of the Queen (January, 1793); at the 18th Brumaire (November 9, 1799); the day after the death in 1804 of the Duke d'Eugénie; in January, 1813, and on the eve of the murder in 1820 of the Duke de Berri. She died in 1822.

There does not appear to be any reason why any or all of her account should be regarded as fiction. The Countess had nothing to gain by attributing such powers of foresight to the Count, nor by perpetuating the story of his constant agelessness. She might, had she been threatened during the overthrow of the monarchy and their friends, or had she herself claimed to possess some of the rejuvenating elixir which he was said to

own. Nor does her writing sound at all like the ramblings of a 'senile old woman.'

None of what she says contradicts other accounts of Saint-Germain's remarkable life and personality - except that he is supposed to have died in 1784. And the Comtesse was not the only person, as we have seen, to record the Count's presence after that date and to affirm that he appeared around the age of forty-five to fifty, whenever and wherever he was seen.

Madame du Hasset, a lady-in-waiting to Madame de Pompadour, and the Comtesse de Genlis, left memoirs in which they described how Saint-Germain perfected a flawed diamond for Louis XV - increasing its value from 6,000 to 9,000 livres. At that time the King had given him rooms at the Chateau of Chambord, where he set up a laboratory.

In an after-dinner conversation at the home of Madame de Troussel, Saint-Germain talked briefly about the Philosopher's Stone. He 'observed that most people who were in pursuit of it were astonishingly illogical, inasmuch as they employed no agent but fire, forgetting that fire breaks up and decomposes, and that consequently it was mere folly to depend upon it for the building up of a new composition. He dwelt much upon this, and finally led the conversation back to more general topics ...'⁵

Then there is the testimony of Madame de Pompadour herself, who said that Saint-Germain had presented a lady of the French court with an elixir which had preserved her beauty and vitality for more than twenty-four years beyond the normal term.

Isabel Cooper-Oakley speculates that Saint-Germain may have been initiated into the secret arts during his term in Persia. A German book about Casanova's memoirs says that 'according to his own very credible statement, it was here (Persia) that he began to understand the secrets of Nature.'⁶

In confirmation of the Count's advanced mystical powers,

⁵ Dieudonné Thiébault: *Mes Souvenirs des Vingt Ans de Séjour a Berlin*, (Paris, 1813.)

⁶ F. W. Barthold: *Die Geschichtlichen Persönlichkeiten in Jacob Casanova's Memoiren*, (vol. ii, Berlin, 1846.)

Cornelius van Sypestyn, in *Historische Herinneringen* (Gravenhage, 1859) relates:

'Sometimes he fell into a trance, and when he again recovered, he said he had passed the time while he lay unconscious in far-off lands; sometimes he disappeared for a considerable time, then suddenly reappeared, and let it be understood that he had been in another world in communication with the dead.'

Both Frederick the Great and Voltaire called him 'the man who does not die' and there are even more astonishing accounts of the Count's continued presence, right up to the early part of this century!

In his *Kleine Wiener Memoiren* (Wien, 1846), Franz Gräffer says that Saint-Germain visited the young Franz Mesmer in Vienna, when 'the kernel of their conversation centred round *the theory of obtaining the elements of the elixir of life by the employment of magnetism in a series of permutations.*' (My italics.)

At the period in question, Vienna was a major gathering-centre for members of secret societies, such as the Asiatic Brotherhood, the Rosicrucians and the Ritter des Lichts. The first-named group had an alchemical laboratory in the Landstrasse.

Franz Gräffer's brother, Rudolph, was left a message by a gentleman of noble bearing who said he was living in Fedalhofe in a room where Leibnitz had stayed in 1713. Gräffer went to the address only to find the room empty; he continued on to the Landstrasse laboratory after collecting his friend Baron Linden en route. When they arrived, Saint-Germain was sitting at a table, reading one of Paracelsus' works.

'It was as if a bright splendour enveloped his whole form,' Gräffer wrote. After a brief conversation in which Saint-Germain told the two astounded visitors he knew exactly who they were and where they had come from, he asked for two sheets of paper. As they watched, he took a pen in each hand and began to write on both, side by side. When he had finished, Saint-Germain placed the two sheets together and held them up to a window. The handwriting matched perfectly.

At length, Saint-Germain said:

'I am leaving; do not visit me. Once again you will see me. Tomorrow night I am off; I am much needed in Constantinople; then in England, there to prepare two inventions which you will have in the next century - trains and steamboats. These will be needed in Germany. The seasons will gradually change - first the spring, then the summer. It is the gradual cessation of time itself, as the announcement of the end of the cycle. I see it all; astrologers and meteorologists know nothing, believe me; one needs to have studied in the Pyramids as I have studied. Towards the end of this century I shall disappear out of Europe, and betake myself to the region of the Himalayas. I will rest; I must rest. Exactly in eighty-five years will people again set eyes on me. Farewell, I love you.'

The Count then made a sign for them to leave. The two men went out, only to be caught in a sudden heavy rainstorm. They dashed back into the laboratory for shelter and, says Gräffer, 'Saint-Germain is no longer there ...'

Although Gräffer does not date these incidents, elsewhere in his book he says that Saint-Germain was in Vienna 'in the period between 1788-90.'

Nor was this the last evidence for the Count's continued presence after his alleged 'death.' The Theosophist Annie Besant, who took over the Theosophical Society following the death of Madame Blavatsky in 1891, claimed to have met Saint-Germain at 19 Avenue Road, London, in 1896. And fellow-Theosophist, Charles W. Leadbeater, a former Anglican clergyman, in *The Masters and The Path* (Madras, 1925), wrote:

'The other Adept I had the privilege of encountering physically was the Master the Comte de Saint-Germain, called sometimes the Prince Rakoczi. I met him under quite ordinary circumstances (without any previous appointment and as though by chance) walking down the Corso in Rome, dressed as any Italian gentleman might be. He took me up into the gardens on the Pincian Hill, and we sat for more than an hour, talking about the (Theosophical) Society and its work ...'

Since the Theosophists had adopted Saint-Germain as one of their own Secret Masters, it is perhaps understandable that Leadbeater did not show a great deal of surprise at meeting the Count, or that he did not go into raptures at the 'privilege' of spending an hour in his company.

If Leadbeater cannot be regarded as a reliable witness - in view of his somewhat dubious reputation⁷ - there is one other person whose claim to have met Saint-Germain cannot seriously be doubted. He was the late Wellesley Tudor Pole, a successful English businessman, Christian mystic and seer. In his book *The Silent Road*⁸ Tudor Pole describes a strange encounter while travelling on the Orient Express. It was in the spring of 1938 and he was on his way to Constantinople, reading Dante's *Inferno*.

At a wayside station in Bulgaria, Tudor Pole looked out of the window and saw 'a middle-aged man, handsome and well-dressed,' walking in the snow along the railway embankment. He smiled and nodded at the somewhat surprised English traveller. 'The train moved off and soon entered a tunnel, but Tudor Pole's carriage remained unlit. When it emerged into daylight again, the stranger was sitting in the opposite corner. The man saw Tudor Pole's copy of Dante and began 'a most fascinating conversation about the problem of heaven and hell and the enigma of our present state of existence.'

Tudor Pole said his travelling companion 'spoke with an impeccable accent, but evidently he was not English. His clothes and the slant of his mind suggested that he might well be Hungarian.' He invited the stranger to dine with him 'to which he replied, surprisingly, that *he did not eat food.*' (My italics.)

Somewhat taken aback and realising that this was no ordinary traveller, Tudor Pole went off to the dining car. When he got back an hour later, his mysterious visitor had gone.

A few days later, Tudor Pole was standing on the platform at Scutari, on the Bosphorus. His luggage was already aboard the train.

⁷ See Francis King: *Sexuality, Magic & Perversion*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1971.)

⁸ (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1960.)

'Once more my friend of the Orient Express appeared; he was standing amongst the crowd some distance away, nodding his head vigorously. Taken aback, I allowed the train to leave without me. Some time later this train was involved in an accident about a hundred and fifty kilometres up the line. Eventually I recovered my luggage. Some of it was blood-stained.'

Tudor Pole did not identify the stranger in his book, but Walter Lang, who wrote the Introduction and also wrote commentaries on another of his books, asked Tudor Pole, 'Do you know who he was, the man on the train?' Tudor Pole replied 'Yes I do. Germain'. He also remained certain to the end of his life that the Count had somehow 'materialised' to act as a guardian and warn him of the impending accident.

It is interesting to note that at no time did Tudor Pole feel afraid of his mysterious visitor – merely puzzled. And that on the occasion when he 'warned' him not to get on the train, he did so not by shaking his head or making any other alarmist gestures, but by nodding. Perhaps if he had made 'panic' signals, Tudor Pole might have been inclined to dismiss him as a crank – and get back on the train.

What kind of a man was Tudor Pole?

Rosamond Lehmann, who was his friend, correspondent and collaborator for the last six years of his life, said:

'Who was the man known to his many friends as T.P.? I don't know: no one, presumably, will ever know, except for certain fellow-initiates and Elder Brothers. Obviously he was a Master: an incomparable Seer, infinitely adept in out-of-the-body travelling ...'

Miss Lehmann recently edited a collection of T.P.'s letters to her.⁹ She says: 'In one letter he writes: "I am only a visitor to this particular planet – not one of its regular denizens." And again: "I come and go when commanded to do so ... I am a modest and anonymous ambassador from elsewhere ..."'

Whoever he may have been in reality, Tudor Pole was no crank. Soldier, traveller and industrialist, he was awarded the O.B.E. and was a respected student of archaeology, the founder of the Big Ben Silent Minute Observance, and Chairman of the

⁹ *My Dear Alexias* (Neville Spearman, 1978.)

Chalice Well Trust at Glastonbury and Governor of the Clifton Tor School for Boys. Although they contain much information that is unusual and other-worldly, his books have a totally convincing and child-like air of utter honesty about them. He emerges as a thoughtful and humanitarian gentleman with a good head for business and fair play and yet one who was in some way in tune with other realities; a possessor, perhaps, of what Colin Wilson has called 'Faculty X.'

Perhaps he was indeed a Master himself, as Rosamond Lehmann suggests. And maybe Saint-Germain materialised to him on that snowy day in 1938 because his 'mission' had not been fulfilled – in the same way that the ancient sage appeared to Jung to signify the transmission of the Chinese wisdom to the West had been fulfilled.

To return to Saint-Germain, many people have considered him to be one of the Secret Masters, a member of the High Initiates of the Great Brotherhood who, in their own mysterious ways, occasionally influence the evolution of mankind.

Isabel Cooper-Oakley says of him: '... to students of mysticism, and especially those to whom the "Great Lodge" is a fact and a necessity in the spiritual evolution of mankind, to those students the widely extended travels of this "messenger" from that Lodge will not be surprising.'

And Manly P. Hall says boldly: 'It will yet be established beyond all doubt that the Comte de Saint-Germain was both a Mason and a Templar ... He had a retreat in the heart of the Himalayas to which he retired periodically from the world.'

He goes on to cite the claim of the Theosophist E. Francis Udny that 'the Comte de Saint-Germain passed through the "philosophical death" as Francis Bacon in 1626, as Francois Rakoczy in 1735, and as Comte de Saint-Germain in 1784. He also feels that the Comte de Saint-Germain was the famous Comte de Gabalis, and as Count Hompesch, was the last Grand Master of the Knights of Malta. It is well-known that many members of the European secret societies have feigned death for various purposes.'¹⁰

¹⁰ *The Secret Teachings of All Ages: An Encyclopaedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, Qabalistic and Rosicrucian Symbolical Philosophy*, (Philosophical Research Society, Los Angeles, Calif., 1928 and 1977.)

PART TWO

THE FULCANELLI STORY

Alas, alas my son, a day will come when the sacred hieroglyphics will become but idols. The world will mistake the emblems of science for gods, and accuse grand Egypt of having worshipped hell-monsters. But those who will calumniate us thus, will themselves worship Death instead of Life, folly in place of wisdom; they will denounce love and fecundity, fill their temples with dead men's bones, as relics, and waste their youth in solitude and tears. Their virgins will be nuns before being wives, and consume themselves in grief; because men will have despised and profaned the sacred mysteries of Isis.

- Hermes Trismegistos, xxvii,
J. J. Champollion-Figierac:
Egypte ancienne, Paris, 1847.

I

Fulcanelli: The Legend

Among the young atomic scientists some looked upon their work as a kind of intellectual exercise of no particular significance and involving no obligations, but for others, their researches seemed like a religious experience.

- Robert Jungk: *Brighter Than A Thousand Suns*,
(Penguin, 1958.)

NOW THAT WE have examined in some detail the unusual lives of the major alchemical Adepts of history, we can begin to look at the story of the amazing contemporary alchemist, Fulcanelli - in the light of what we know of the Hermetic tradition.

Like most English readers, I first encountered the name of Fulcanelli and a few intriguing details about his existence in Louis Pauwels' and Jacques Bergier's best-selling book, *The Dawn of Magic*, first published in Britain in 1963. But, as indicated in my Introduction, the Fulcanelli saga goes back much further than that.

The story of Fulcanelli properly began in a very limited way among a select group of alchemy enthusiasts in Paris of the early nineteen-hundreds and nineteen-twenties. There were several of these researchers, either working in concert or independently, dotted about the French capital. From time to time some of them would meet in the boulevard cafes and talk, just as the savants and literati have always done in Paris. And, during these conversations on occultism, alchemy, Rosicrucianism and other allied topics, the name Fulcanelli began to crop up casually. These cryptic mentions of a mysterious, brilliant, practical operator, on the brink of becoming an Adept, naturally raised a great deal of curiosity among the few

who sat up and took notice. They seemed to emanate mostly from the conversations of a witty, eccentric, eloquent, yet impoverished artist and illustrator, Jean-Julien Champagne, and his small entourage. Champagne was in his late thirties to early forties during the period in question and, no doubt, seemed to others something of an anachronism among the younger men he hung around with. He tended to wear old-fashioned looking clothing, wore his hair unfashionably long and often appeared to talk in riddles. He was like an overgrown Bohemian, a character out of Maupassant perhaps, and somehow, behind the slightly humourous twinkle of his dark blue eyes there appeared to be unfathomable depths; he talked and acted like a man who *knew something*.

Despite his bonhomie, his love of conversation, double entendre and rhetoric, there was always an intangible, impassable barrier between Champagne and those who did not belong to his immediate circle. He drank a lot of Pernod and absinthe, which no doubt helped to consolidate his impenetrability. He could also be a boaster and a braggart and occasionally dropped hints that he knew the secrets of alchemy.

His companions varied, but only marginally. A constant one was Eugene Canselier, a slight, intense young man in his early twenties. Another was Gaston Sauvage, a budding young chemist around the same age as Canselier. Yet another may have been Jules Boucher, although, as we shall see later, this is open to dispute. Boucher was a twenty-year-old with a keen interest in the occult, who would often spend hours browsing in a bookshop that specialised in metaphysical subjects in the rue de Rennes, which is in the Luxembourg District and runs from the St. Germain Boulevard to the Boulevard du Montparnasse.

Pierre Dujols and his wife, who ran the shop, were a friendly, helpful and talkative couple, who seemed to thrive not only on their business, but on the fevered and intense discussions which often arose as young students of the occult got into their particular subjects. Dujols, himself a writer on arcane topics, kept a card-index file which he allowed certain favoured customers to consult. It was an elaborate affair, containing thousands of cross-referenced topics and source-materials on practically every area of the occult.

Sometimes, Champagne and his companions could be seen frequenting the city's great libraries, consulting old, rare volumes and manuscripts, holding huddled, softly-spoken conversations around an array of books opened on their pupitres, at the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Arsenal, the Sainte Genevieve and the Mazarin.

Often, the discussions at the Dujols' shop extended beyond normal opening times, a select few staying behind to drink coffee and wine and continue their deep delvings into magic, astral travel, mysticism, the Qabalah and alchemy. There were also, it is said, regular weekly meetings at Jean-Julien Champagne's humble room, on the sixth-storey of a dilapidated tenement house at 59 bis, rue de Rochechouart, in the Butte-Montmartre district. It was from brushes with this little group that outsiders occasionally heard oblique references to 'the Master, Fulcanelli.' The hints were that he was elderly, distinguished, rich, incredibly knowledgeable and possibly even of noble or aristocratic background. He was a genuine 'Philosopher of Fire', an accomplished practical alchemist who was certainly capable of perfecting the Great Work, if he had not already done so.

Who was he? Who had seen him? Did he really exist?

Champagne and his friends would merely smile mysteriously and knowingly when such questions were asked, or make some tantalising remark about what 'the Master' had said. Few had met him. But he did exist. He had, some said, a calling-card, which they had seen. It bore the signature only of 'Fulcanelli' in a finely-formed, majestic hand. Obviously the writing of a man of culture and background.

Then, in 1926, it was no longer a rumour. That autumn, *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* was published by Jean Schemit, of 45 rue Lafitte in the Opera District of central Paris. It was a luxury, limited edition of only 300 copies. Its subtitle read: An Esoteric interpretation of the Hermetic Symbols of the Great Work. The Preface was signed by Eugene Canselier and dated October, 1926.

The book contained thirty-six illustrations, two of them in colour, by the artist Champagne. The text itself was attributed simply to Fulcanelli.

So ... he did exist. Or at least, someone did. Someone

educated and erudite enough to write an elegant and strangely fascinating tract which purported to interpret the hidden symbolism of Europe's major Gothic cathedrals and churches as complex, coded alchemical knowledge. But the question still remained: where and who was Fulcanelli?

The Preface gave some guarded clues. Eugene Canseliet, a mere twenty-six years old at the time of writing, stated:

'For a disciple, it is an ungrateful and difficult task to introduce a work written by his own Master. It is, therefore, not my intention to analyse here *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, nor to underline its high tone and its profound teaching ...

'For a long time now the author of this book has not been among us. The man has disappeared and I cannot without sorrow recall the image of this industrious and wise Master, to whom I owe all, while lamenting that he should so soon have departed. His numerous friends, those unknown brothers who hoped to obtain from him the solution to the mysterious *Verbum dimissum* (missing Word), will join with me in lamenting his loss.'

But what, precisely, did it all mean? 'Not been among us ... disappeared ... sorrow ... lamenting his loss'? Was Canseliet suggesting that the great Master was dead? Apparently not.

As Canseliet went on, somewhat circumspectly:

'Having reached the pinnacle of knowledge, could he refuse to obey the commands of Destiny? No man is a prophet in his own country. Perhaps this old saying gives the occult reason for the convulsion produced in the solitary and studious life of a philosopher by the flash of Revelation. Under the influence of that divine flame, the former man is entirely consumed. Name, family, native land, all the illusions, all the errors, all the vanities fall to dust. And, like the phoenix of the poets, a new personality is reborn from the ashes. That, at least, is how the philosophic Tradition would have it.

'My Master knew this. He disappeared when the fatal hour struck, when the Sign was accomplished. Who, then, would dare to set himself above the Law? As for me, in spite

of the anguish of a painful but inevitable separation, I would act no differently myself if I were to experience today that joyful event, which forces the Adept to flee from the homage of the world.

'Fulcanelli is no more. But we have at least this consolation, that his thought remains, warm and vital, enshrined for ever in these pages ...'¹

The occult fraternity who had quickly snatched up the 300 copies could, it seemed, take their choice. Either they could believe that Fulcanelli was a genuine Adept who, having attained the supreme level of spiritual enlightenment by his perfection of the Philosopher's Stone, had become mystically transfigured – raised, as it were, onto a higher plane than the purely mundane and physical. Or, they might prefer to think that he had chosen to disappear from public view – into self-imposed exile, perhaps, to try to come to terms with the great inner change he had undergone. There was only one other alternative: the whole thing was a clever and elaborate hoax – one of several, perhaps, pulled off by the often wickedly inventive Jean-Julien Champagne.

Speculation naturally ran wild in occult circles. Articles and theses were written, trying to identify Fulcanelli with this and that figure on the alchemical scene.

Spurred, no doubt, by the hints at his aristocratic roots, there were suggestions that he was a surviving member of the former French royal family, the Valois. It was true that the Valois line had supposedly died out with Henri III in 1589. But Marguerite de France, daughter of Henri II and wife of Henri IV of Navarre, survived until 1615. She had several lovers and was divorced in 1599. And it was known that her personal crest bore the sign of the pentacle, a magical star symbol whose five points each carried a letter of the word SALUS, meaning 'health.' Was this a clue that some alchemical secret had been entrusted to her and passed on to surviving strains of the family? And could the 'noble' Fulcanelli in reality be a descendant of that line? It was possible, but highly tenuous.

¹ *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, trans. Mary Swarder, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1971.)

There were other, more or less plausible suggestions. One was that Fulcanelli was the bookseller-occultist Pierre Dujols; another that he was the writer J. H. Rosny Senior. There were also at least three practising alchemists around the same period, who worked under the pseudonyms of Auriger, Faugerons and Dr. Jaubert. Finally, of course, there was Eugene Canseliet himself, who wrote the Preface to Fulcanelli's book, or even Jean-Julien Champagne, who illustrated it. Yet no single one of the arguments seemed conclusive.

As time went by, Champagne was seen less and less in public. His heavy drinking was taking its toll. Eventually he developed gangrene in his legs and was confined permanently to his sixth-floor garret. Then, after a particularly long and painful illness, he died in 1932, aged fifty-five.

But before that, in 1929, a second work by Fulcanelli appeared: *Les Demeures Philosophales*. (The Dwellings of the Philosophers.) It came from the same publishing house of Schemit, was twice the length of its predecessor and, by implication, was a much improved, logical extension of the earlier work. It covered the origins and history of alchemy, its symbolism in myth and religion and, once again, examined architecture - this time mainly in 12th to 15th century chateaux and mansions - in the light of esoteric Hermetic knowledge. The book's immediate implication was that - as Canseliet had said - Fulcanelli was no longer to be found, but was still functioning somewhere, either abroad or on some subtle, imperceptible level from which he was still able to transmit his knowledge.

The book also helped to inspire a new theory about the identity of Fulcanelli. The inside rear cover of the second volume featured a coat-of-arms which bore Hermetic symbolism: a lion, the Sun and Moon (Philosophical sulphur and mercury), and a five-pointed star, or pentagram. This shield was identified as the armorial bearings of Robert Jollivet, 30th abbot of Mont-Saint-Michel, whose 13th-century escutcheon was carved on the stone ramparts of the monastery. It was also known that Mont-Saint-Michel did have abbots and monks who were interested in alchemy and the mystical hopscotch motif of St. James of Compostella and the scallop-shell symbol of the alchemical pilgrim featured in the arms of the monastery.

Some theorists, therefore, speculated that the shield of Dom Robert Jollivet in *Les Demeures Philosophales* was intended to signify that his namesake, F. Jolivet Castelot was Fulcanelli. Jolivet Castelot was President of the Alchemists' Society of France around 1914. He was an associate of the famous French Qabalist Papus (Dr. Gerard Encausse) and, between 1896 and 1935, published many studies in alchemy, spagyrics and Hermetic science. He was also a member of the Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix (Rosicrucians). But Jolivet Castelot had made no secret of his researches and, in any case, he was what was known as an Archimist, rather than an alchemist. An archimist was a researcher who tried to effect transmutation by orthodox chemical means and Jolivet Castelot's work was accepted neither by the ordinary chemists of his day, nor by the purist alchemical tradition.

With the death of Champagne in 1932, the idea that he might have been the great Fulcanelli also seemed to diminish. Why should a man who had attained the Philosopher's Stone die - and such an unfortunate, wretched death at that? Didn't the Stone lead to the Elixir, the Universal Medicine which had great powers of rejuvenation and could cure all ills?

It seemed that, as Canseliet had maintained all along, talented artist and raconteur though Champagne may once have been, he certainly had been no accomplished alchemist.

The alchemist Faugerons, after many years of fruitless labours, also died. Besides, why should he, already hiding behind one pseudonym, choose a second one? The same could apply to Auriger (who rejected the work of Jolivet Castelot), and Dr. Jaubert. As for the bookseller Dujols, he wrote alchemical studies under the name of Magophon and was a purely speculative alchemist. Finally, the life of the writer J. H. Rosny Senior was too well known publicly to consider his identification as Fulcanelli.

The lingering loophole of doubt that still surrounded the identity of Fulcanelli served to keep his legend alive. It was supplemented by the fact that a study of his works revealed that here was no idle dabbler, no misguided amateur speculator or theorist; here was a true alchemist who really knew what he was talking about. To those with any knowledge of alchemy, it was clear that Fulcanelli's works were in the same league as

some of the great classics of alchemical study: *The Secret Book* of Artepheus; Valentine's *Triumphal Chariot of Antimony*; Philalethes' *Open Entrance*; Sendivogius' *New Light of Chymistry* and Thomas Norton's *Ordinall*. Not only that, Fulcanelli – although in places as cryptic and guarded as the best of his forerunners – wrote for the most part in plain, modern language which, with detailed study, could provide important insights into the Great Work.

To compound the issue, in 1935, only three years after Champagne's tragic death, word went around that a third book by Fulcanelli, entitled *Finis Gloria Mundi*, was to be published. If Fulcanelli did not exist, someone obviously did who was writing these intriguing and often brilliant volumes.

Sadly, however, for those alchemical students who eagerly awaited it, the third opus of Fulcanelli's trilogy never appeared. But, among those who cared, the controversy limped on. Fulcanelli was alive and well in Brazil or Argentina, some said. The theorists went on theorising. Canseliet went on refuting. Occasionally, he implied, he *knew* the identity of Fulcanelli, but had been sworn to secrecy. At other times, he claimed no knowledge whatsoever of the true background of his mysterious Master. Whoever he was, Canseliet insisted, Fulcanelli certainly was not dead and he was none of the names put forward by the various speculators.

As best he could – interrupted as he was by curious inquirers – Canseliet went on with his own alchemical research and wrote and edited his own books. He received the royalties from sales of Fulcanelli's works which, he freely admitted, his Master had given over to him.

Le Mystères des Cathédrales went into a second, larger edition in 1957 – thanks to a sudden general upsurge of interest in the occult in Europe among a wider public. It was issued by Omnium Litteraire. The original publisher, Jean Schemit, had died in 1945.

For this edition, Canseliet added a Second Preface, in which he leaked out some more interesting information.

He wrote:

'When *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* was written down in 1922, Fulcanelli had not yet received the *Gift of God*, but he

was so close to supreme Illumination that he judged it necessary to wait and to keep the anonymity, which he had always observed – more, perhaps, from natural inclination than from strict regard for the rule of secrecy.'

From this brief statement, it became possible to estimate the period when Fulcanelli was supposed to have perfected the Stone. For in his earlier Preface, it will be remembered, Canseliet quite readily affirmed that his Master had already been transfigured. Fulcanelli must have achieved his goal, therefore, sometime between 1922, when he wrote *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, and October 1925, when Canseliet penned his original Preface.

Canseliet's remarks about his master's anonymity, however, being 'perhaps from natural inclination than from strict regard for the rule of secrecy,' do not seem consistent with the words of Fulcanelli himself. Throughout the whole of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, whenever he appears to be broaching one of the key secrets of the Art, he frequently reminds the reader of his traditional oath of secrecy, in such phrases as:

'There are, however, bounds which may not be overstepped ... We are touching on the greatest secret of the Work, and I must remain true to my vow.' Indeed, the final words of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* adjure the successful seeker to 'KEEP SILENT.'

Canseliet himself augments this attitude in his Second Preface, when he says:

'Indeed, right from the time that his first writings were compiled, the Master expressed his absolute and unshakeable resolve to keep his real identity in the background and to insist that the label given him by society should be unequivocally exchanged for the pseudonym – already familiar in his case – required by Tradition. This celebrated name is so firmly secured, even to the remotest future, that it would be absolutely impossible for any patronymic, even the most brilliant or highly esteemed, to be substituted for it.'

There are further, highly interesting indications in Canseliet's Second Preface which are worth examining here. Attempting

to explain the reason for Fulcanelli's disappearance – an action which few outside the occult tradition could be expected to grasp clearly – he wrote:

'One should at least realize that the author of a work of such high quality would not abandon it the moment it came into the world, unless he had pertinent and compelling reasons, long pondered, for so doing. These reasons, on a very different plane, led to the renunciation at which we cannot but wonder, since even the loftiest authors are susceptible to the fame that comes from the printed word. It should be said that the case of Fulcanelli is unique in the realm of Letters in our day, since it derives from an infinitely superior code of ethics. In obedience to this, the Adept attunes his destiny to that of his exalted predecessors who, like himself, appeared at their appointed time on the great highway like beacons of hope and mercy. What perfect filial duty, carried to the ultimate degree, in order that the eternal, universal and indivisible Truth might continually be reaffirmed in its double aspect, the spiritual and the scientific. Fulcanelli, like most of the Adepts of old, in casting off the worn-out husk of his *former self*, left nothing on the road but the phantom trace of his signature ...'

Canseliet also quoted in full a letter, purporting to be from Fulcanelli's own Master, congratulating him on his success in the Great Work.

Despite these allusions to a noble and high-minded ethical code, there remained those critics to whom such apparent mystification was unacceptable. Fulcanelli *had* to be somebody – dead or alive. But the question remained open: who?

In 1960, the second of Fulcanelli's works, *Les Demeures Philosophales*, was also re-published by Omnium Litteraire.

Canseliet, to those who managed to gain access to him, continued to insist that his Master was not dead. He even claimed to have met him since his disappearance, at pre-arranged rendezvous and that, far from being the old man in his eighties as when they had last seen each other, Fulcanelli looked only about fifty. In other words, the apparent ages of Master and former pupil were slowly converging!

Naturally, those who took the alleged long life-spans and

rejuvenation processes of men like Flamel and the Comte de Saint Germain with a pinch of philosophical salt, were inclined to scoff. So far as they were concerned, the onus was upon Canseliet. He was the one who claimed Fulcanelli's continued and prolonged survival – let him produce the man and prove it.

Then, that very same year that *Les Demeures Philosophales* reappeared, a bombshell was dropped, from a totally unexpected quarter.

The French writer Louis Pauwels and his friend Jacques Bergier, a former physicist and writer-researcher, published their best-seller, *Le Matin des Magiciens*.² The pair were already fairly famous in France through their periodical *Planete*, which regularly contained articles on all kinds of arcane subjects from UFOs to magic, astrology to ley-lines, dowsing to atomic physics. The book was more or less a natural extension of their work in this direction. It took official science to task for turning a blind eye to areas it could not satisfactorily explain. It paid tribute to the collector of oddities, Charles Fort – and reformulated some of the kind of questions he had been inclined to ask, but in a much more modern and readable way. It became a prototype for many later, cheap imitations.

It was written in such a breathless, urgent style that, in an almost throwaway passage, Jacques Bergier, a computer-minded, Polish-Jewish exile, claimed that he had actually met Fulcanelli – in June, 1937! At that time Bergier, who had studied chemistry and physics, was working with the brilliant Andre Helbronner, the Franklin Institute gold-medallist who was in Paris researching nuclear physics. (Helbronner was later murdered by the Nazis in 1940 at Buchenwald.)

One afternoon that summer of 1937 – five years before the start of the Manhattan Project and eight years before the first atomic bomb was tested in the desert of New Mexico – a stranger entered Bergier's laboratory at the Paris Gas Board. In *Le Matin des Magiciens* Bergier, who was endowed with a photographic memory, reproduced the ensuing conversation.

Without introducing himself, the stranger said:

² (Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1960.)

'M. Andre Helbronner, whose assistant I believe you are, is carrying out research into nuclear energy. M. Helbronner has been good enough to keep me informed of the results of some of his experiments, in particular about the appearance of radioactivity in connection with plutonium when a bismuth rod is volatilized by an electric discharge in deuterium at high pressure. You are on the brink of success, as indeed are several other of our scientists today. May I be allowed to warn you to be careful? The work that you and your colleagues are undertaking is appallingly dangerous. It imperils not only you yourselves - it is a threat to the whole of humanity. The liberation of atomic energy is easier than you think, and the radioactivity produced can poison the atmosphere of the entire planet in the space of a few years. Moreover, atomic explosives can be produced from a few grammes of metal powerful enough to destroy whole cities. I am telling you this point-blank: the alchemists have known it for a very long time!'

Naturally enough, talk of alchemy in 1937, especially in connection with nuclear physics, was preposterous so far as Bergier was concerned. He was about to come back with a sarcastic remark, when the stranger began speaking again:

'I know what you are going to say, but it's of no interest to me. You think that the alchemists were ignorant of the structure of the nucleus, knew nothing of electricity and had no means of detection. Therefore, they have never achieved a transmutation, let alone released nuclear energy. I shall not try to prove to you what I now intend telling you, but I would like you to repeat it to M. Helbronner: Certain geometrical arrangements of highly purified substances are sufficient to release atomic forces without recourse to vacuum lines.'

The stranger then picked up from Bergier's desk a copy of *An Interpretation of Radioactivity*, by the physicist Frederick Soddy, and quoted from it:

'"I believe that there were civilisations in the past that were familiar with atomic energy, and that by abusing it they were utterly destroyed."'

He then went on:

'I ask you to believe that certain techniques have partially survived. I also ask you to remember that the alchemists have always taken religious and moral issues into consideration when carrying out their researches, while modern physics was born in the eighteenth century from the spare-time amusements of a few lords and rich libertines. Science without a conscience ... I thought it my duty to warn a few research workers here and there, but I have no hope that my warnings will bear fruit. Taking it all in all, I have no reason to hope.'

Bergier said he would never forget the precision of the man's 'metallic, dignified voice.' He asked the authoritative stranger:

'If you are an alchemist yourself, sir, I cannot believe that you spend your time trying to make gold like Dunikowski or Dr. Miethe. For the past year I have been trying to find out something about alchemy, and find myself swamped by charlatans or by interpretations that seem to me to be quite nonsensical. Can you, sir, explain to me in what your work really consists?'

His visitor replied:

'You are asking me to summarize in four minutes four thousand years of philosophy and my whole life's work. Furthermore, you are asking me to translate into plain words concepts for which such a language is not intended. All the same, I can say this: you will not be unaware that in present-day official science the part played by the observer becomes more and more important. Relativity, the principle of indeterminacy, demonstrate the extent to which the observer today intervenes in all these phenomena. The secret of alchemy is this: there is a way of manipulating what modern science calls a force-field. This force-field acts upon the observer and puts him in a privileged position in relation to the universe. From this privileged position, he has access to the realities which are normally concealed from us by time and space, matter and energy. This is what we call the Great Work.'

'But what about the Philosopher's Stone? The making of gold?' Bergier asked.

'Those are only applications of it, particular cases. 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.'

'And what happens to them then?'

'Perhaps I shall know, one day.'

Bergier never saw the man again. But he became convinced that he had been talking to none other than the mysterious Fulcanelli and continued so to believe right up to his death on November 11, 1978. According to Pauwels and Bergier, Fulcanelli survived the Second World War, but disappeared after the Liberation.

After 1945, the Americans were anxious to round up anyone - especially German scientists - who had knowledge of nuclear physics, for fear they might defect to Russia. As a result of Bergier's testimony - he was engaged in Intelligence work during the War - the American Office of Strategic Services (the Alsos Commission, forerunner of the C.I.A.) made a search for Fulcanelli, but failed to find him.

According to Pauwels, the U.S. Major who questioned Bergier about Fulcanelli allowed him to see the first official report on the military use of the atom. In it, Bergier learned that a nuclear pile was, as Fulcanelli had told him, a 'geometrical arrangement of highly purified substances' and that neither electricity nor a vacuum technique was employed in its detonation. The report even carried a footnote about the risk of global contamination by radioactive pollution of the atmosphere - again, as Bergier's mysterious visitor had indicated.

The authors' conviction that Fulcanelli was still around somewhere, was strengthened in 1953 when, one night at the Café Procope in Paris, Pauwels met an alchemist - a young man of about thirty-five - who told him:

'It is possible to live infinitely longer than an unawakened man could believe. And one's appearance can change completely. I know this: my eyes know it. I also know that

there is such a thing as the Philosopher's Stone. But this is matter on a different level, and not as we know it. But here, as elsewhere, it is still possible to take measurements. The methods of working and measuring are simple, and do not require any complicated apparatus ...

'Patience, hope, work. And whatever the work may be, one can never work hard enough. As to hope: in alchemy hope is based on the certainty that there is a goal to attain. I would never have begun had I not been convinced that this goal exists and can be attained in this life.'³

It was 1963 before Pauwels' and Bergier's best-seller was translated into English as *The Dawn of Magic*, or, *The Morning of the Magicians*, (published by Anthony Gibbs & Phillips Ltd.) And another eight years went by before - thanks to Neville Spearman Ltd. - monolingual English readers could study *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* for themselves. In the process of translation, by Mary Swower, the occultist Walter Lang, who wrote the Introduction, was in correspondence with Eugene Canseliet.

Canseliet told him that, using a minute quantity of the Powder of Projection, given to him by Fulcanelli, he was able to perform an alchemical transmutation of 100 grammes of gold. According to Canseliet, the experiment took place in a gasworks laboratory at Sarcelles, in the presence of the chemist Gaston Sauvage and the artist Jean-Julien Champagne. This was in September, 1922.

Canseliet also told Lang that, after a period of many years since his disappearance, Fulcanelli contacted him to arrange a rendezvous. They met only briefly and Fulcanelli once more disappeared. But Canseliet said that, when he had originally worked with Fulcanelli,

'the Master was already a very old man, but he carried his eighty years lightly. Thirty years later, I was to see him again, as I have mentioned, and he appeared to be a man of fifty. That is to say, he appeared to be no older than I was myself.'

³ *Le Matin des Magiciens*, (Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1960.)

Working from Canseliet's age - he was born December 18, 1899 - this means that the meeting must have taken place around 1949, and that Fulcanelli had originally disappeared around 1919. These statements of Canseliet - and there are more - are important in trying to unravel the mystery of Fulcanelli and I shall return to them in due course to try to co-ordinate the various dates given.

By the time of the Pauwels-Bergier book and the English publication of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, Fulcanelli had taken on the charisma of a twentieth-century Comte de Saint-Germain, almost an alchemical 'saint.' Canseliet's home, near Beauvais, where he had established a laboratory and carried on with his own experiments, became swamped with mail. Callers turned up unannounced on his doorstep, demanding to see him and question him about who and where Fulcanelli was. European radio and television stations, magazines and newspapers, eagerly sought interviews.

Occasionally, Canseliet obliged by talking about alchemical work - even about his Master. But still he did not reveal Fulcanelli's identity.

On his own admission to the alchemical author Prince Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, Canseliet struggled for more than twenty-five years trying to perfect the third and final stage of the Great Work - and each time, failed. He blamed adverse climatical conditions. Yet, if he achieved nothing else, he had managed to perpetuate the now-immortal name of his Master - and in the process became the first alchemist in history to appear live on radio and television.

II

The Experiment Which Never Was

The baker is an alchemist when he bakes bread, the vinegrower when he makes wine, the weaver when he makes cloth; therefore, whatever grows in nature useful to man - whoever brings it to the point to which it was ordered by nature is an alchemist.

- Paracelsus.

THE TRANSMUTATION which Eugene Canseliet performed in 1922 with some of his Master's Powder of Projection was apparently not the only one which Fulcanelli achieved. According to the modern alchemist Frater Albertus, now based in America, Fulcanelli himself transmuted a half-pound of lead into gold and 100 grammes of silver into uranium - in 1937.

Frater Albertus Spagyricus, alias Albert Riedel, is a German-born alchemist who heads the Paracelsus Research Society in Salt Lake City, Utah. The Society has a centre there where annual 14-day classes are conducted. There, I am told, only minimal fees - about half the cost of an average motel - are charged for use of the self-catering facilities and sleeping accommodation. In addition, the PRS has some 500 followers dotted throughout the United States, Canada, Britain, India, Australia and New Zealand. These usually carry out individual studies and research, guided by the dozen or so books of Frater Albertus in several languages, and by articles in the Society's quarterly bulletin, *Parachemy*, which often includes material by Albertus himself. He also goes on occasional lecture and teaching tours to meet his followers personally.

Frater Albertus appears to teach a form of spiritual alchemy,

supplemented by a type of physical, vegetable alchemy, in which therapeutic tinctures are produced to be taken as medicines. Students are encouraged to experiment independently, using Frater Albertus' *Alchemist's Handbook* as their main guide.¹

By following his instructions, which appear to be based in part on homoeopathic principles, along with astrological considerations and a smattering of elementary chemistry, it is possible to produce a herbal tincture for each day of the week, each one having a planetary correspondence or affinity: Sun-herbs for Sundays, moon-herbs for Mondays and so on, up to Saturn-herbs, for Saturdays. Devotees of Frater Albertus' system assure me that there are quite definite beneficial results to be obtained from the preparation and ingestion of these tinctures.

Frater Albertus also teaches the principles of metallic alchemy and, from time to time, publishes details of the procedures to be followed in one or other stages of the Work in the Society's bulletin.

One PRS member recently wrote to me: 'We produced the philosophic mercury the dry way about three years ago, but to date have failed to rectify it. However, in the past few weeks I feel we have had the veil pulled back a bit more and possibly now see how. Here's hoping, for our next step is the potable gold - a very potent medicine.'

He also told me that preparation of the seven basic planetary herbal tinctures to be taken one a day 'will start a separation, a purification in your blood and more life will be carried and with it more consciousness. This we did for about two years before venturing into the more potent extracts from the metals. We have used mostly antimony daily.'

According to Frater Albertus, the second known transmutation instigated by Fulcanelli - apart from the one described by Canseliet - took place in the autumn of 1937. He says it took place at the Castle de Lere, near Bourges, and was witnessed by the castle's owner, Pierre de Lesseps, two physicists, a chemist and a geologist.

Fulcanelli added 'an unknown substance' to half-a-pound of

molten lead - and it transmuted into the same weight of gold. On the same occasion, Fulcanelli repeated the process with 100 grammes of silver, which was transmuted into a like amount of uranium.

'When asked what the substance was,' says Albertus, 'or what it contained to bring about this change in the metal, he would only mention offhandedly that it was derived from ferrous pyrite (fool's gold), a ferrous sulphide FeS_2 .'

Albertus adds: 'The astonished witnesses, who had watched very carefully and had previously thoroughly examined the ingredients used by the alchemist, re-examined as well his end-products. They all had to concede to this phenomenon of transmutation of one metal into another.'

It was after *this* transmutation, in 1937, according to Albertus, that Fulcanelli disappeared. All of this information was contained in Albertus' book, *The Alchemist of the Rocky Mountains*.² It is a strange work, written in the form of a novel, but contains whole passages which are obviously intended to be read as fact. This technique, as I have already noted, has often been used by occultists and alchemists in the past to convey information which might not normally be accepted as nonfiction in a formal context or, alternatively, to veil particular secrets from the profane. *The Chymical Wedding of Christian Rosenkreutz*, Bulwer Lytton's *A Strange Story* and the anonymous *Voyage en kaléïdescope* are obvious examples.

I wrote to Frater Albertus, asking where he got the information about the 1937 transmutations. An assistant or secretary politely replied on his behalf saying that, unfortunately, Frater Albertus was so busy teaching classes full-time and was about to leave for further instructional courses in Austria that he had not time to answer personally and properly. He did, however, give me permission to outline an account of a meeting he had with Eugene Canseliet in 1975.

Canseliet, he says, 'evades all questions about Fulcanelli by saying he does not know the alchemist's present whereabouts or whether Fulcanelli was a real or assumed name. (?) He steadfastly refuses to give out any information.'

Frater Albertus says, however, that the reason the 'FBI' (sic)

¹ Samuel Weiser, New York, 1960.

² (Paracelsus Research Society, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1976.)

launched a search for Fulcanelli and 'are still seeking him' is not simply because of his advanced knowledge of alchemy, but because he is rumoured to possess a manuscript by Roger Bacon giving the formulae for nuclear fission and fusion. Bacon, says Albertus, made a reference in his writings to 'a certain material' from which 'an explosive can be made that can destroy an entire army or a city with a blinding flash.' Again, unfortunately, Albertus does not state where he got his information.

The meeting between Albertus and Canseliet was arranged by Signor Villa-Santa of Lugano who, along with his wife, the former Countess Sophia Tekeli de Scel are, according to Albertus, keen students of alchemy. Because Albertus does not speak French and Canseliet does not speak English, he took Signor Augusto Pancaldi of Ascona with him as interpreter. When they first arrived at the home of Canseliet, an hour's train journey from Paris, Mme. Canseliet disclaimed knowledge of their pre-arranged visit and said her husband was not home. She agreed, however, that they might call later. When they did, they were admitted by Canseliet, a short balding man, whose half-circlet of remaining hair trails down his neck in long strands.

Much of their conversation was concerned with the subject of alchemy and its principles, so I will extract only those portions dealing directly with Fulcanelli.

Albertus said: 'Your name, Canseliet, has become almost synonymous with that of Fulcanelli. Is this because you are the only person who can be named as his pupil?'

Canseliet: 'I have been the only pupil of Fulcanelli.'

Albertus: 'Did you work theoretically with Fulcanelli, or were you only his helper in practical alchemical laboratory work, or both?'

Canseliet: 'We, Fulcanelli and myself, were engaged in only speculative alchemy. I have seen quite a few things while I was with Fulcanelli. I did him many favours that made it possible for me to watch him often while he worked. I did not work with him. I only observed. It was in 1915 when I got to know Fulcanelli. I was 16 years old and it all happened through a servant of his who said to me: "I am going to introduce you to a very interesting person," and that was Fulcanelli.'

Albertus: 'When did you see Fulcanelli last?'

Canseliet: 'I was around Fulcanelli for 15 years. Fulcanelli left in 1930, the year when *Les Demeures Philosophales* was published. In 1932 Jules (sic) Champagne died, whose portrait you see hanging there on the wall. He was the one who made all the drawings in the book.'

(Note: According to my information, the first edition of *Les Demeures Philosophales*, published by Jean Schemit, appeared in 1929.)

Albertus: 'Do you know where Fulcanelli originated? Where he came from?'

Canseliet: 'No. I only know that he had a large circle of friends, among them Ferdinand (de) Lesseps and Pierre Curie to mention only a few well-known names.'

Albertus: 'Do you know where Fulcanelli is now, or do you have any clues?'

Canseliet: 'In 1922 he visited me several times in Sarcelles. When he left in 1930, he was an old man, but when I saw him again in 1952, he looked hardly 50 years old.'

The conversation then turned to other modern alchemists and Canseliet said he didn't know any, although he did mention the late Armand Barbault. He said he did not take Barbault's system seriously, but that each operator had to work in his own way. (Barbault practised a kind of spagyric alchemy, collecting earth and dew and producing vegetable elixirs.)³

Asked about the future of practical laboratory alchemy, Canseliet said: 'I believe youth will enter into it. For more than 20 years now I have observed that the future of alchemy belongs to youth. The philosopher with his stone is always in the present and this present contains both past and future.'

Albertus asked Canseliet if he would be prepared to take part in joint laboratory experiments. Canseliet agreed, but said that his laboratory was being reorganised and eventually the two men agreed to arrange a meeting the following year.

'Did Fulcanelli prove in the laboratory how to produce the philosophical mercury, and did you personally handle the same?' Albertus asked. 'If yes, would you recognise at once the

³ *Gold of a Thousand Mornings* by Armand Barbault (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1975).

philosophical mercury if I were to show it to you?’

‘Yes, I have watched,’ Canseliet answered. ‘Yes, I have handled the philosophical mercury. Yes, I would recognise the philosophical mercury if one would show it to me.’

Albertus: ‘Were you an eyewitness while Fulcanelli made the gold transmutation?’

Canseliet: ‘Yes. I was present with Gaston Sauvage and Jul. (sic) Champagne. The transmutation was made in the Usine à Gaz de Sarcelles where I was employed. The transmutation was performed by myself under the direction of Fulcanelli. I received three small pieces of the transmuting stone. This transmuting stone consisted of one part gold and one part philosophical stone.’

Albertus: ‘Did Fulcanelli make any other transmutation with only you present?’

Canseliet: ‘No. He did not make any transmutation with only myself present. I know only of the one at Sarcelles.’

Albertus: ‘Do you continue to teach your pupils what Fulcanelli has taught you?’

Canseliet: ‘I am the headmaster (chef d’école) similar to André Breton. My biggest contact with pupils is through books and considerable correspondence. I am also visited by many people and if I did not from time to time act as though I were not available at home, I would not be able to do very much. I also have considerable correspondence with Italians.’

Again the talk turned to particulars of alchemical processes and Canseliet told Albertus that he had aided his own recovery from a heart attack in 1974 through his use of a ‘nitre’ he had prepared alchemically. ‘Thanks to this alchemical preparation I am still here,’ he said.

Did Canseliet and Albertus ever get together for their proposed alchemical experiments? No. A spokesman for Frater Albertus tells me that this was because Canseliet ‘cancelled out.’ On the other hand, however, a source close to Canseliet tells me that he was not terribly impressed by the visiting Austrian alchemist.

III

Behind the Legend: An Exposé And A Rebuttal

Imagination is the star in man, the celestial or supercelestial body.

– Martin Ruland: *A Lexicon of Alchemy*,
(London, 1892.)

ONE OF THE most intriguing and certainly the most thoroughgoing of investigations into the Fulcanelli mystery was carried out in the 1930s by another Parisian student of the occult, then aged twenty-nine, named Robert Ambelain. In presenting and examining his ‘evidence’ in this chapter, however, it is only fair to state at the outset that his conclusions are not necessarily those of the present writer. My reasons for this involve even further and later developments in the Fulcanelli story which I intend to set out in due course.

Ambelain had read both Fulcanelli’s books and, partially inspired by them, launched into his own investigation of Gothic architecture and the medieval builders’ guilds and their use of astrological and magical esoteric symbolism. As a result, he wrote his own book, *Dans l’ombre des Cathédrales* (In the Shadow of the Cathedrals) and began looking around for a publisher. The book was to contain fairly lavish photographs and illustrations and it so happened that for one of these, he required the authorisation of Fulcanelli and his publisher.

Ambelain went to see Jean Schemit, original publisher of both Fulcanelli’s works, to seek this permission and discussed with him the way in which *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* had originally taken shape.

According to Ambelain, Schemit told him that during the

early part of 1926, he was visited by a shortish man with a long moustache which swept across his cheeks in the 'Gallic' fashion. This stranger, who did not give his name, engaged Schemit in conversation about ancient modes of architectural design and embellishment, in particular the Gothic style, which he claimed was a kind of code. This code, he said, was none other than the old 'argotique' or old slang, still known as 'langue verte' (green language). Green, he informed Schemit, *was the colour of initiation*. He went on to speak of the profound, philosophical depth of cant, play on words, of ambiguities of years gone by which had passed into the common idiom superficially as puns. In reality, he said, it constituted the ancient Hermetic language, the mysterious Language of the Birds, the genuine 'cabale solaire' - solar cabal - of the Initiates. He then took his leave.

A few weeks later, another visitor appeared at Schemit's publishing house and introduced himself as M. Eugene Canseliet. He brought with him a manuscript which he offered Schemit to read with a view to publication, which he agreed to do. It was in extremely well-formed handwriting, on sepia-coloured quadrillé - a type of square-ruled paper in common use. The manuscript was entitled *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, 'an esoteric interpretation of the Hermetic Symbols of the Great Work.' It was signed Fulcanelli.

According to Ambelain, Schemit told him:

'I perused the manuscript and I was only mildly surprised to find that it bore the same speech-patterns of the words of my mysterious earlier visitor, in so far as it related to the "green language", the slang, the *cabale solaire* and the relationship of Gothic art to hermetic alchemy. I decided, in view of the interesting nature of the work, to publish it in a limited, luxury edition. M. Canseliet explained to me at that time that the author, the mysterious Fulcanelli, wished to remain incognito, and that all matters relating to the work would be handled between myself, himself, and the artist commissioned with the illustration of the work. It was so agreed - and I never knew anyone other than these two men.'

Shortly afterwards, according to Ambelain, Canseliet

returned to Schemit's premises along with the artist Jean-Julien Champagne, who had signed the illustrations for the manuscript.

Ambelain said Schemit told him: 'I recognised, without being too surprised, moreover, my mysterious visitor of the previous month.'

He added:

'Although the illustrator appeared to be treated as a collaborator of some talent in the agreement, yet without any literary responsibility, I was surprised to note that in my presence, M. Canseliet showed him extraordinary respect and admiration, addressing him one minute as "Master", the next "my Master", when simply talking to him or asking his advice. And, when Champagne was not there, it was again in the words, "My Master", that M. Canseliet referred to him.'

As far as Schemit was concerned, there was no real mystery about the identity of Fulcanelli.

He told Ambelain: 'There was never any question of Fulcanelli being a real person of that name or of a mysterious person disguised under that name. Nobody ever spoke of it and it was always Champagne who made judgements, choices and decisions. It is for that reason that I am convinced that Champagne and Fulcanelli were one and the same!'

Quite naturally, Ambelain was surprised and intrigued at the publisher's words. After all, he himself had written a similar book to that of Fulcanelli - and even dedicated it to the man he had assumed was a genuine Master. The inscription page of *Dans l'ombre des Cathédrales* read: 'To the memory of Fulcanelli, artisan of the Great Work and Philosopher of Fire, we dedicate this imperfect, rough draft of hermetic esotericism.'

In addition, Ambelain's attention was also drawn to Champagne by an article in a popular occult weekly, *Votre Bonheur*. Issue No. 13, of June 20, 1935, contained an article by the occultist Jules Boucher, then aged around thirty-three. In it was a description of an illustration Champagne had designed for a book by Boucher. When Ambelain checked with Boucher, he admitted that the description was Champagne's own.

It read:

'A flamboyantly-styled, vaulted arch, supported by two

Gothic pillars revealing and framing a section of the vast Libyan desert. In the background appear the three pyramids of Cheops, Chephren and Mykerinos, as well as the great caravan route joining Upper and Lower Egypt. They are illuminated by the rising Sun, while a waning Moon stands above the horizon. Thus one finds the origins of Egyptian science and its zenith in the Middle Ages marked in time; then, in space, the universal symbolism of the Sun and Moon in opposition.

'In the foreground is an open book which a small chameleon is looking at curiously, emblem of the colour manifestations which a substance similarly undergoes in its multiple reactions; it bears the motto of the Creator of all things: "*Ego eimi to Alpha kai to Omega*" - "I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End."' "

Now according to Ambelain, Canseliet had always passed off his friend Champagne as a talented illustrator, but having no knowledge of alchemy. He was therefore surprised at the astrological references of the Sun and Moon (philosophical sulphur and mercury), the Egyptian symbolism and the association of the chameleon with alchemical colour-changes, in Champagne's description. Following his talk with the publisher Schemit, Ambelain decided to follow up his inquiries.

Until the death of Jean-Julien Champagne in 1932, he and Canseliet had occupied nearby rooms on the sixth-floor at 59 bis, rue de Rochechouart. When Ambelain called at the address in 1936, he found their ex-concierge, Mme. Labille, still there. She told him that in all the time Champagne lived at the address he had only ever received three visitors: M. Canseliet, Jules Boucher and Gaston Sauvage. He occupied a small room with a sloping ceiling and skylight and his only possessions had been a small cupboard, a chair, a table and a bed upon which, during the illness which led to his death, he often slept fully-dressed. During the later stages of his sickness, he ate only one meal a day which at first was brought to him by Sauvage, then more latterly by Mme. Labille herself. When Champagne died, she said, his sister called to take away his few possessions and any papers he may have had.

When Ambelain questioned her, Mme. Labille insisted that Champagne occupied only the one room and did not have another set aside which he could have used as a laboratory. He had no lab equipment, or books, she said. She did, however, agree that Canseliet showed Champagne great respect, often calling him 'Master' and 'My Master.'

Ambelain next sought the advice of Jules Boucher, who told him that for nearly twenty years he had gone to weekly meetings at Champagne's garret. He also contradicted the concierge's statement that there were no books in the room. There was no bookshelf, he said, but a pile of volumes stacked along the wall by the bed. During these weekly soirees and especially while Champagne was unable to move about due to his illness, he would reach out from where he lay to select a volume he wanted. He hated electric lighting and, to find a book, he used a large paraffin lamp to which he had fixed a magnifying glass to direct the beam like a miniature light-house.

According to Boucher, Champagne was no mere artist. He had an old biscuit tin containing galbanum or gum resin. (This was derived from two species of plant, *ferula galbaniflua* and *ferula rubricaulis* and was once used for the relief of bronchial congestion.) From time to time, Boucher said, Champagne would put the open tin to his nose and inhale deeply for a long time. He said Champagne told him that the resin had a magical quality and helped him gain intuitive insights into knowledge he sought.

Ambelain says Boucher gave him some of Champagne's 'magical incense' but did not know its composition. Ambelain claims he was able, after various fumigation experiments to duplicate it and gave the formula in one of his own books under the name of the 'Incense of the Rosy-Cross.'

Boucher also claimed that Champagne practised 'exteriorisation' - nowadays known as 'astral projection' or induced out-of-the-body experience. Apparently, he said, he could externalise his 'subtle body' through his spleen or solar plexus and, while he apparently slept or lay in a trance, visit various sources of information on the 'astral' plane. When he awoke from these trance-states, he could remember the information he had gained in this way. (This is fairly consistent with the

claims of practitioners of ritual magic. The spleen and solar plexus are also regarded by some occultists as subtle centres of the body, like the *chakras* in Tantricism.)

Oddly enough, Boucher told Ambelain that Champagne had a particular horror of 'Left-Handed' occultism and frequently warned him to stay away from groups which practised this kind of magic. Boucher claimed he took this advice although, in 1941, he published a *Manuel de magie pratique* which, according to Ambelain who wrote the preface, did not entirely bear out this claim.

Having apparently discovered this new side to the impoverished illustrator's character, Ambelain made more inquiries into Champagne's background. He eventually published them in a periodical, *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jacques*, but not until 1962. They appeared under the heading of 'Jean-Julien Champagne, alias Fulcanelli,' in a section entitled *Dossier Fulcanelli*, and it is from this source that I have extracted much of the information regarding Ambelain's 'evidence' in this chapter.

Jean-Julien Champagne was born at 6 p.m. on January 23, 1877, at Levallois-Perret, Seine. He lived an unreported and, presumably, unremarkable life and little is known of his childhood and youth, except that he was enrolled at the famous L'Ecole des Beaux Arts, where he became a pupil of the celebrated French artist Jean Leon Gérôme. Sometime around the age of fourteen or fifteen, according to Ambelain, he became interested in alchemy and the hermetic symbolism of secret societies. He taught himself elementary chemistry in a small, do-it-yourself laboratory at his home at Villiers-le-Bel, which was apparently financed by his mother. According to his sister, he began research on the Great Work at the age of sixteen. His alchemical studies seem to have stemmed from an interest in and experimentation with the composition of colour pigments at art school.

He was a short, eccentric youth, even for an art student of those days. He wore his dark straight hair long, parted in the centre, from where it fell in smooth sweeps to below his ears. Quite early photographs of him, in his late teens or early twenties, already show him sporting a full moustache which he cultivated sideways and upwards slightly, in the style called

Gallic. He had large, blue, expressive eyes, and a water-colour portrait of him in later life by his friend Canseliet bears a faint resemblance to the young Salvador Dali. (See Fig. 8) His expression, however, is gentle, reflective and has none of the studied 'manic' look of the Spanish surrealist.



Fig. 8. Jean-Julien Champagne (after a water-colour portrait by Eugene Canseliet).

Although young Champagne seems to have taken his alchemical studies seriously, as a student he developed a reputation for a wry sense of humour which he often indulged by playing deliciously wicked practical jokes on the gullible.

At the School of Fine Arts, Champagne learned to copy old manuscripts and became quite skilled at it, using an ink of his own concoction, containing a small amount of acid which attacked parchment and gave it all the appearance of antiquity. He was an expert calligrapher, which can be seen from his reproductions of alchemical manuscript illustrations in Fulcanelli's books. Eventually, he used his talents for copying manuscripts to earn small commissions as a freelance. This is not to suggest, however, that he became a professional forger, although he did use his imitative abilities for his own amusement from time to time.

Ambelain claims that for his illustrations of the Fulcanelli works, Champagne had photographic enlargements of his subjects made - ornately decorated ceilings or bas-reliefs in cathedrals - which were extremely pale, the outline of the designs being just about perceptible on drawing paper. These, Ambelain says, he touched up in sepia gouache to provide remarkably accurate reproductions of the various 'hermetic' symbols.

Around 1907, aged about thirty, Champagne struck up a friendship with the de Lesseps family, well-to-do heirs of Ferdinand de Lesseps (1805-1894), the distinguished diplomat and engineer who designed the Suez Canal. De Lesseps' son, also named Ferdinand, set up a laboratory in the rue Vernier, near the Porte de Champerret and invited Champagne and a man named Max Roset to work there with him on various types of research.

One of the fruits of this work was the invention by Champagne of a curious 'aerial sledge', powered by a motor-driven propeller, a vehicle which was said to be quite suitable for travel on roads. It was eventually presented to the Tsar Nicholas II. Ambelain says he has a photograph of this strange vehicle in the Avenue Montaigne, with Champagne at the wheel. The picture is inscribed 1911 and dedicated to Max Roset.

Ambelain speculates that perhaps Champagne had contacts with the Russian court, possibly via the contemporary occultist Papus (Dr. Gerard Encausse). But it is more likely that any liaison with the Tsar was due to the prestige of the de Lesseps family.

It was in 1916 that Champagne met Eugene Canseliet, then only seventeen years old. (According to Frater Albertus' account, Canseliet said he met Fulcanelli a year earlier, in 1915.) They became firm friends and, says Ambelain, Champagne 'took him on as a pupil.' It must have been some time around this period that Champagne and Canseliet took up their lodgings in the rue de Rochechouart. Champagne continued his freelance artistic work, sometimes using Canseliet as an intermediary; he also continued his research work with de Lesseps and Roset.

In 1921 Ferdinand de Lesseps, who had two sons, Paul and

Bertrand, decided to set up a second laboratory at the Chateau de Lere at Bourges and took Champagne along as the boys' teacher. Ambelain claims that Champagne had boasted he would be able to manufacture gold within six months. But after 60 grammes of gold had been wasted in various experiments, Ambelain says, he still had not succeeded.

Whatever the nature of the researches that went on at the Chateau de Lere, it is almost certain that at least part of them were devoted to producing therapeutic ointments or medicines. An old concierge at the chateau told Ambelain that during Champagne's stay there, one of the cooks pricked her arm with a fishbone. It became infected, swollen and turned black. Using a black, scented ointment, Champagne treated the arm and it was cured within fifteen days. According to Jules Boucher, Champagne was later authorised to produce the unguent for use in hospitals for the treatment of gangrene.

Ambelain says that it was during this period at the chateau that Champagne became familiar with the hermetic sculptures of the nearby Lallemond Mansion, whose strange symbolism Fulcanelli analysed and Champagne illustrated in *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*.

It is not certain how long Champagne stayed at the Chateau de Lere. Canseliet says he returned to Paris in 1925, but it is possible that Champagne made several visits to the capital in the interim because Ambelain says Jules Boucher claimed to have met the artist for the first time there in 1922. This is not, however, consistent with Boucher's statement that he attended meetings at Champagne's garret for 'nearly 20 years,' for Champagne died only ten years later in 1932.

When they first met, Boucher was working at Rhone-Poulenc where, it will be recalled, the chemist Louise Barbe died in 1919 after swallowing an 'elixir.' At the laboratories there, Boucher said he met a cousin of Champagne who eventually persuaded the artist to take on Boucher and Gaston Sauvage as pupils.

It was also in September of 1922 that Canseliet says he performed a transmutation at Sarcelles, with powder given to him by Fulcanelli. This is particularly interesting since we have already heard how Champagne had wasted 60 grammes of gold in his experiments at Chateau de Lere.

Although there are already areas of dispute in the story so far, depending on whether the account of Boucher or of Canseliet is accepted, this is the point where the controversy becomes truly complicated. Canseliet refutes Boucher's testimony almost entirely, but I shall deal with his version later.

Ambelain says that Boucher often recalled to him the period when his Master - i.e. Champagne - 'drew up a manuscript of his works.' Says Ambelain: 'He told me of the outbursts of Champagne when, correcting the proofs, he found misprints or errors of composition. Both the proofs of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* and *Les Demeures Philosophales* were redrafted eight times under the watchful eyes of their author. Each time, Champagne found material that needed correcting.'

Ambelain's next statement, based on Boucher's account, if true, is really damning.

He says: 'It was Champagne who insisted on writing the prefaces of his books himself and who asked M. Canseliet, his oldest and longest-serving pupil, to sign them.'

By this time, Ambelain says, Champagne had founded a 'fanciful secret society, whose name was further intended to complicate the mystery of the subjects dealt with in each work.' This society was known as the *Frères d'Héliopolis* and both of Fulcanelli's works were dedicated to them.

'In fact,' says Ambelain, 'the Brothers of Héliopolis was limited to Champagne, Max Roset, Dujols, Canseliet, Sauvage and Boucher, to which should perhaps be added the names of Steiner and Faugerons.'

The implication of all this, Ambelain suggests, is that the Brothers of Héliopolis was intended to embrace a particular school of contemporary alchemists who would use the mysterious name of Fulcanelli as a figurehead, but that Fulcanelli was none other than the alter-ego of Jean-Julien Champagne.

We shall now deal with his evidence for this supposition.

Ambelain claims that Boucher himself helped in the preparation of Fulcanelli's two works, by correcting the many sets of proofs. He also cites a dedication by Eugène Canseliet of the title-page of his book, *Deux logis alchimiques*, which read:

To Jules Boucher,
a mutual friend of Champagne and myself, to the

hermetist who, better than anyone else is able to determine exactly the hidden personality of Fulcanelli.

Cordially, E. Canseliet.

Ambelain points out the wide age-gap between Champagne and his pupils. While the others were relatively young and inexperienced in alchemical studies, he says, Champagne had spent some thirty-eight years of practical, uninterrupted work. He was fifty-three when *Les Demeures Philosophales* appeared, while Canseliet, who had been around him for fourteen years, was only thirty-one. Boucher, meanwhile, was twenty-eight and had only been in the group for eight years. (Which again contradicts Boucher's claim of attending meetings at Champagne's room for nearly twenty years.)

Steiner and Roset, he says, were friends of Champagne from before the First World War and were his pupils at the de Lesseps laboratory in the rue Vernier, as Canseliet and Boucher later became at rue Rochechouart.

He comments: 'The Brothers of Héliopolis form a kind of convenient "court" around the master, a quite appropriate set of circumstances which allowed him to indulge and develop the anonymity to which he was so devoted ...'

And yet, this does not appear to be consistent with other aspects of Champagne's flamboyant personality; his practical joking, for instance. The artist's wicked sense of humour is appropriately demonstrated in one of Boucher's own anecdotes. Champagne once persuaded a naive young follower that the first essential step in alchemy was to stock up a plentiful supply of coal, in readiness for when the furnace was lit and had to be kept burning over a long period. Goaded on by Champagne, the poor youth heaved sack after sack of the stuff up to his room, until there was scarcely room to lie down and sleep. Then, when it was time to apply the fire to his proposed operation, Champagne took the youth aside and seriously advised him that not only was the search for the Philosopher's Stone a dangerous quest, but an utterly vain one - leaving the student almost cramped out of his own quarters by his massive coal supply and, no doubt, well out of pocket.

Another of Champagne's jokes was to write to the editor of *Mercure de France*, purporting to be a M. Paul Le Cour, who

published a review called *Atlantis*. The magazine was devoted to stories and articles about the mysteries of the fabled Lost Continent. Apparently, it was a magnificent piece of deception. Using his talents as a copyist, Champagne got the letterhead, ink, handwriting and signature perfect. The letter suggested that the readers of the *Mercure de France* should subscribe to a fund to build a memorial for the victims of the great Atlantis cataclysm – a monument to be set up in the Sargasso Sea which would, presumably, have to be buoyant! Whether the letter saw print or whether it was spotted by proof-readers is uncertain, but the unsuspecting Paul Le Cour received a blast from the *Mercure* publisher which he neither understood nor deserved.

Amusing as these anecdotes may seem, somehow, they do not appear consistent with a man wishing to remain an anonymous figurehead behind an occult secret society. Nor do they fit the personality of the obviously erudite person who wrote the Fulcanelli works, which we shall look at in detail in a later chapter.

And yet, Ambelain says: 'It would be very wrong, however, to suppose from this that Champagne was not sincere in his studies of the Hermetic Art.'

He suggests that Champagne was probably tuberculous and had devoted himself to the quest for the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir in the hope that he might cure himself. And, in the event that he succeeded, and so that he would not attract attention to 'an abnormal longevity' he decided to hide himself 'after attainment,' behind a pseudonym.

'It was this that gave birth to a desire to remain unknown to the readers of his books and for his pupils to respect this anonymity,' Ambelain says.

But somehow, this argument does not balance out. If Ambelain accepts that Champagne succeeded in perfecting the Stone – which he apparently does – how does he equate this with the artist's death in 1932? Quite simply, he doesn't.

We can now begin to interpolate some of Canseliet's criticisms of Ambelain's case for Champagne as Fulcanelli. First of all, Canseliet points out that Ambelain gets quite a few of the straight facts wrong, and indulges in some wild speculation about ensuing events. Ambelain says, for instance, that Champagne died at 'Brossais hospital from dropsy of the

leg, leading to amputation of the toes.' Canseliet, who nursed Champagne up to his final hours, says he died in the tiny garret at 59 bis, rue de Rochechouart, in the most squalid conditions, of gangrene of the legs and that his toes were not amputated, *but actually dropped off*.

Ambelain says that he was among those who protested, along with Jules Boucher, when rumours spread in 1935 that Fulcanelli was to publish a third work. It was then, he said, that other rumours asserted that Fulcanelli was not dead, but alive and either in Brazil or Argentina. Yet he says that when he discovered that Eugene Canseliet had 'kept both the artist's walking-cane and the dressings he wore at his death,' he became convinced that Champagne had been Fulcanelli. For he then makes a somewhat macabre suggestion: 'If M. Canseliet kept these pieces of evidence, it was either because he considered it possible that he could use them as familiar objects with which to communicate with their owner posthumously, or that the "humble illustrator of the books of Fulcanelli" represented for him something more than an occasional collaborator but rather the one whom, during his lifetime, he had according to numerous witnesses, called "my Master."'

Canseliet says that neither of these suppositions is true. And in the case of the first, when one considers the somewhat unsavoury realities surrounding the conditions of a person dying of gangrene, it is not difficult to believe him.

'What I took possession of,' Canseliet says, 'was not the walking-cane but the crutches of Champagne, which I immediately gave to a sister of charity and, on the other hand, to say that I kept the last dressings, as Ambelain says, is similarly a lie generated in the coffee houses. Whoever can appreciate the conditions that accompany hardening of the arteries and, ultimately, gangrene with abundant bleeding and secretions, would find it difficult to believe that I secretly squeezed, for the purposes of base sorcery, these miserable, infected and repugnant rags.'

Ambelain claims that Canseliet also took away on Champagne's death a card-index which he says the artist had compiled through using that of Pierre Dujols. He also says Boucher took some of Champagne's original drawings for Fulcanelli's works along with a few alchemical books.

Canseliet says the card-index referred to was Fulcanelli's own, which was used exclusively in writing the Master's two books. He lost this, along with his own two indices of 4,000 filing cards, and representing twenty years of work, in May, 1940. But, he adds: 'Thanks to M. Ambelain, I have at last discovered the explanation of the disappearance of the original drawings, on Bristol board, for *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* and, most probably my fine copy of the unpublished works of Nicholas Valois; and I now know that he stole them.'

But Ambelain presents further 'evidence.' He says that, in a dedication of the original edition of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, given by Champagne to Jules Boucher, the following inscription appeared:

To my friend, Jules Boucher,
adept of the high sciences, I offer the token
of cordial sympathy,
A. H. S. Fulcanelli.



Fig. 9.

Ambelain claims that the handwriting is that of Champagne and adds that it would be extremely unlikely that Fulcanelli - presumably still alive at the time, in 1926 - would allow Champagne, the mere illustrator of his book, to sign his work on his behalf in such a way.

He then goes on to point out that, on Champagne's tomb, at the cemetery of Arnouilles-les-Gonesses, is the following inscription:

Here rests Jean-Julien Champagne,
Apostolicus Hermeticae Scientiae
1877-1932

Of course, the initials of the Latin motto - Apostle of the Hermetic Science - are the same as those preceding the 'Fulcanelli' signature in Boucher's copy of the book. However, I understand from a close friend of Canseliet that this was merely one of many instances of Champagne's postures and acts of braggadocio. As Jacques Sadoul has noted, Champagne often liked to pass himself off in public as Fulcanelli, which is hardly the expected behaviour of a true and genuine adept. The same source informs me that it was Champagne's sister who asked for the Latin inscription to be placed on her brother's tombstone - in accordance with his own wishes.

Once again, it is difficult to equate the high-minded author of Fulcanelli's works with such egocentric behaviour. Either Champagne *was* Fulcanelli and wanted to keep the fact a secret by inventing the mysterious, pseudonymous alchemist to cover up his true identity, or he was not. If he was Fulcanelli, such acts would seem to defeat the entire purpose of the exercise. On the other hand, if he was not in reality Fulcanelli and merely wanted to bask in the glory of the genuine alchemist, both in life and death, these facts seem to be more consistent in retrospect. Whichever is the case, I repeat that neither is commensurate with the spirit of Fulcanelli's actual writings.

It is also difficult to understand how a man who was such a prodigious drinker and braggart - to the extent of hastening his own death - could have managed to produce such erudite works and at the same time to have elaborated such clever hoaxes, while retaining the faithfulness and trust of his circle of friends. Canseliet, it should be remembered, nursed Champagne through the terrible squalor and indignity of his last years. And even since his death, Canseliet has never spoken disparagingly of his friend Champagne and his drunkenness; he has merely denied that Champagne was Fulcanelli and insisted that he was merely the illustrator of the Master's works. Why should a man remain so silent about the faults of his dead friend, except for the most noble reasons, when they could quite reasonably be put forward as an excellent argument that he was not the true Master?

But now, let us look at more of Ambelain's evidence.

In support of the fact that Champagne was by no means ignorant of alchemy, Ambelain says that the artist was known

as an alchemist – ‘and a very well-informed one at that’ – before the First World War. At one stage, he claims, the first wife of Dr. Serge Voronoff, the celebrated ‘monkey-gland’ experimenter, was in touch with Champagne as a result of his known researches into rejuvenation processes.

On the whole, it would seem that there is no doubt that Champagne *was* a student of alchemy and that he professed more than a superficial knowledge of the subject. But this does not prove that he was Fulcanelli.

As one final piece of irrefutable ‘proof’, Ambelain draws attention to a crest or shield which appeared on the final page of the original edition of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*.

This shield, he notes, apart from its alchemical symbolism, bears a dog-Latin motto: UBER CAMPA AGNA.

Champagne, he says, was named Jean-Julien Hubert Champagne, after his father, Alphonse-Hubert. And, having in mind both Champagne’s apparent knowledge of the phonetic cabala – as displayed to the publisher Schemit – and similar references in the text of the book, the motto gives the game away. *Uber Campa Agna*, as he so rightly says, is a phonetic approximation of Hubert Champagne – in keeping with the cabalistic tradition of words which *sound* alike. As dog-Latin, *Uber Campa Agna* cannot be precisely rendered, except perhaps roughly as ‘Over (*Uber*) a field (*campus*) or seahorse (*campa*) ewe-lamb (*agna*).’ But phonetically, bearing in mind that the initial ‘H’ in French is silent and that ‘Ch’ can be pronounced hard, the phrase could be enunciated as ‘Hubert Champagne.’

He points out, moreover, that the symbolism of the shield, both in heraldic and alchemical language, also points to the identity of Champagne.

The shield, enclosed in a black circle, depicts a medieval knight’s helmet, *en face* (full-face), whose grille forms a cross, while its decorative plumes fall down to form a background for the motto. Ambelain says:

‘the full-frontal helmet as a heraldic device is the exclusive privilege of kings, and the king in alchemy, as the kings in the epiphany, is the guest who has been able to extract from the *terre feuille* (green earth), the mysterious

two-faced Infant. [Double-natured element, or *rebis* in alchemical terms.] The visor, which opens in the form of a cross informs us that the royalty which it proclaims is indeed the metallic royalty, because the cross is the traditional symbol of the *creuset*, known as crucible in the ancient manuscripts, from the Latin *crucibulum*.’

Beneath this crest is the shield itself.

Says Ambelain:

‘The illustrator has emphasized the pointedness of the ancient, double-pointed arch to draw attention to the triangle, point-down, symbolising the eternal, female principle of generation and signifying the union of earth and water. If we consider this shield in the light of traditional terminology, we see that these are virtually messages enshrined in armorial bearings: “On a field of gold with a silver seahorse (*campa*) *passant*, poised pale above the rest ...” The three elements of the work are thus evoked: Fire, red, which is the heraldic red; Silver, symbol of the Mercury of the Wise, and Gold, image of the Sulphur of the Wise.’

The seahorse, he says, is the symbol of the Universal Medicine.

He quotes Charbonneau-Lassay’s *Christian Bestiary* in identifying the seahorse as the equivalent of the ancient Eastern ‘genie’ or spirit of medicine – a creature which Dioscorides, Pliny and Galen claimed was able to ward off or cure the illnesses of man and which Galen and Aetius in particular employed as a symbol of the Divine Light. Like the dolphin, it was considered to be a guide which lead the dead to the Fortunate Isles and was the symbol of the First Mercury of the alchemists.

Ambelain further notes that field of gold (*champ d’or*) is further phonetic allusion to Champagne’s name, while ‘campagne’ is the pronunciation of ‘champagne’ in Picardy and in Saintonge, where it is also the definition of a cultivated plain. ‘*Le campagnard*,’ he also points out, is a ‘labourer’ – a name often used in alchemy for one who labours with Fire.

He rounds off this somewhat complex co-relation of alchemical, heraldic and phonetic correspondences by drawing

attention to the penultimate paragraph of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, with its allusions to royalty (crowned), the humility and modesty of the labourer (alchemist) and the importance of nature:

'Finally, when success has crowned so many years of labour, when his desires have been accomplished, the Wise Man, despising the vanities of the world, will draw near to the humble, the disinherited, to all those who work, suffer, struggle and weep here below. As an anonymous and dumb disciple of eternal Nature, an apostle of eternal Charity, he will remain faithful to his vow of silence.'

Yet, if these final words are true and if Champagne was indeed Fulcanelli, he could hardly be described as upholding his vow of silence – nor of adhering to the principles of humility and anonymity – by giving away his identity via the symbolism of the coat-of-arms. The shield, it is well to remember, appeared in the first edition of Fulcanelli's book – well before Champagne's death. Again, there is here a serious moral contradiction in terms, between the spirit in which the words of Fulcanelli are written and the seemingly wishful thinking of Champagne, a noted prankster, punster and braggart.

I must admit that, when I was first made aware of this enigmatic shield – which did not appear in subsequent editions of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* – I was inclined to accept Ambelain's analysis. But, after studying more closely the life of the unfortunate Champagne and talking to associates of Canseliet, I have come to doubt the validity of the argument.

I am informed on reliable grounds that the shield, which was obviously intended to be taken as the coat-of-arms of Fulcanelli, was a contrivance of Champagne's own devising, which he introduced into the artwork of the book without the knowledge either of Canseliet or of Fulcanelli himself.

But Ambelain's argument does not end here. He points out that the name of Fulcanelli is an anagram of 'l'écu final' – *the final shield* – thus showing that Champagne/Fulcanelli was actually intent on drawing attention to his real identity via the shield.

This poses tremendous problems. Not the least question

being: where did all this involved and complex cipher-manipulation and symbolic jugglery begin (and where does it end)? Fulcanelli is a phonetic approximation of the names Vulcan, the blacksmith god who works with fire, a very sound alchemical label, and Helios, the sun-god, equally appropriate since the sun symbolises Gold and the philosophical sulphur. But did Champagne, then, begin with the shield and work backwards? Or did 'l'écu final', as an anagram of Fulcanelli, occur to him after the alleged 'invention' of the alchemical pseudonym – and inspire him to insert the shield and its dog-Latin motto?

Were it not for the tremendous profundity and importance of Fulcanelli's works – which the reader or alchemical student must ultimately judge for himself – it would be tempting to dismiss the entire saga as an ingenious and highly elaborate hoax, or possibly conspiracy. Especially in view of the curiously contradictory nature and character of Champagne.

But if this were so, it must then be asked: to what purpose? Champagne died of self-inflicted illness through his drinking. Canseliet, on his own admission, has not perfected the elixir. None of the other Brothers of Heliopolis gained anything from their association with the Fulcanelli affair. And all that remains is a profound mystery.

No less perplexing, perhaps, is the fact that Ambelain himself believes that Champagne actually succeeded ultimately in manufacturing gold. Not, as Canseliet states, Fulcanelli did in 1922, but 'approximately two or three years before his death.' He also asserts, without giving any reason, that the transmutation took place in Champagne's garret at 59 bis, rue de Rochechouart, in the presence of Boucher and 'probably also of Canseliet.' (Canseliet, it will be remembered, said the experiment took place at Sarcelles, in the presence of Gaston Sauvage, Champagne and with himself as operator.)

Ambelain goes on further to state:

'Was the metal obtained pure gold, or simply a metal of the same colour, density and inalterable by normal processes? At the moment, it is hard to determine. It is hard to judge with precision ... One would have to resort to precise scientific analysis.'

Yet he then goes on to claim that the gold was used to make

a sizeable signet ring which Champagne wore on his right ring finger. It was engraved, he says, with the figure of Baphomet, the horned devil, surrounded by interlocking triangles (as in the magical Seal of Solomon), a crescent with its horns pointing upwards, and the alchemical symbols of the Sun, Moon and Earth.

This ring, he claims, passed, on the death of Champagne, to one of his students, who about ten years later became a victim of Parkinson's disease. Writing in 1962, Ambelain said: 'He is still alive, but in a body over which he has no control. The signet ring of alchemical gold (soft gold, for it remained pure) is still on his finger.'

(I have written several times to M. Ambelain in the hope of discovering more about this strange ring and its owner – along with other pertinent facts about his investigation of the Fulcanelli affair, but have so far received no reply.)

It is now time to summarize some of Canseliet's answers to Ambelain's conclusions about the Champagne-Fulcanelli identification. First of all and, perhaps, most important, Canseliet denies quite assertively that Jules Boucher, who is, after all, Ambelain's chief source of information, was an intimate of Jean-Julien Champagne. Nor, says Canseliet, was he ever a member of the Brothers of Heliopolis.

Somewhat sarcastically, he states: 'Jules Boucher must have made his weekly visit to see Champagne over a period of twenty years, in the greatest secrecy, because I never saw him at any time. I did see him two or three times in 1922, right at the beginning, along with Gaston Sauvage in Champagne's ramshackle dwelling at Arnouville, and I did not see him again until 1946.'

This, it must be admitted, is a very valid point, since Canseliet and Champagne lived in the rue de Rochechouart, on the same storey, for something like ten years.

Of the dedication in Boucher's copy of his book, *Deux logis alchimiques*, Canseliet says, again sardonically: 'Of course he would be the ideal person to determine the secret identity of Fulcanelli – the main reason being that he frequently heard the Master discussed, without ever having had the privilege of meeting him!'

He denies categorically that Champagne ever made gold or

that he manufactured the baphomet ring. He also refutes outright the way in which Ambelain describes Champagne as having visited the publisher Schemit incognito.

'I vouch that he [Schemit] never met Julien Champagne and that the latter did not accompany me to Schemit's premises on any occasion,' he says. 'On this question, I have two declarations, one in MS form, the other typed, which put the facts irrefutably straight.'

He says he also possesses documents, signed by Schemit on April 6, 1926 and November 6, 1929 – both during Champagne's lifetime – which make him the sole owner of the texts and drawings of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* and *Les Demeures Philosophales*. Fulcanelli, he says, authorised him to secure publication of both books and gave him the rights to all royalties – 'as he promised me as recompense for my prolonged service as his disciple.' He adds, however, that neither of these has by any means made him a wealthy man.

On the allegation that Champagne wrote the Prefaces to the books and got him to sign them, Canseliet is equally straightforward in stating that he would no more have done so than he would have allowed Champagne to sign his own works. Besides, the suggestion that Canseliet did not write the Prefaces himself is self-defeating on two main points: (1) Their style is vastly different to the writing style of Fulcanelli, and (2) it remains so throughout subsequent Prefaces appended to the books *after* Champagne's death.

Canseliet says that the original Fulcanelli manuscripts were not, as Ambelain suggests, on sepia-coloured, lined 'quadrillé' paper, but on white, unlined paper. Furthermore, they are in Canseliet's own italicized script and were dictated to him by the Master. Also, he says, there were only two – not eight – sets of proofs, which he corrected himself on his Master's instructions.

Canseliet denies that Champagne 'faked' the plates for Fulcanelli's books by working over faint photographic enlargements. 'He was,' says Canseliet, 'a master of the crayon and brush in the same way a violinist is master of his instrument.'

He does, however, concede that Champagne was an experimenter in spagyrics – the making of medicinal preparations by alchemical processes – and produced 'medicinal tinctures' on a small, pot-bellied stove.

He and Champagne also experimented at the Broussais hospital - where Ambelain mistakenly says Champagne died - not on unguents but in plasters, under the aegis of a Dr. Brosse and a Professor Laubry. He makes the very valid point, too, that if, as Ambelain says, Champagne had died at the hospital, he could hardly have taken possession of his 'walking cane and last dressings.' Canseliet has already pointed out that he simply gave Champagne's crutches to a sister of mercy, rather than taking the alleged items.

On the question of Champagne's garret, Canseliet says the artist did not have books stacked against the walls; the only reading matter he had consisted of a seven-volume set of the New Larousse Illustrated Encyclopaedia. He describes Champagne's quarters, a room barely 12 metres square, as follows:

'Immediately facing you on entering, to the south, was a central, hinged skylight in the angle of the roof, dividing it in half. The acute angle which it formed with the floor was cluttered with all kinds of domestic objects and items. To the left of the door was the wooden bed, then a small cupboard which reached up to the ceiling and which I still have and, filling up the whole of the rest of the wall-space between, was a chair on which were piled the seven volumes of the New Larousse Illustrated. From the wall on the right, a marble fireplace jutted out and between it and the sloping ceiling were two chests side by side; the first was used for storing coal, the other, which was voluminous, was a cupboard. On the far side of the chimney, in the opposite recess, was a plank from which a curtain hung and which took up the space behind the door in the corner of the room. Finally, to complete the clutter, there was a little table and a second chair.'

There was no question of Champagne having a laboratory at this address, nor even at Villiers-le-Bel, provided by his parents, whom Canseliet says did not move there until 1913.

'The only room worthy of the name of laboratory which he could have used was in a separate room at the rue Vernier, which I visited every week from the summer of 1916 until the family moved in the following year,' he says. It was at this

time, Canseliet says, that he carried out commissions for Champagne's freelance art work.

As to Champagne's eccentricities - sleeping fully-clothed, using a 'lighthouse' paraffin lamp, his alleged 'exteriorisations' and his magical incense - Canseliet dismisses them as 'gross lunacies which may recall memories that are diverting for some, and dramatic and poignant for others.'

He says that, for all the claims against Champagne as a practical joker, Jules Boucher himself, who died in 1957, was himself a teller of tall tales and who also liked to use pseudonymous aliases, such as Herjus le Bouc and Julius Hucerbo, both being anagrams of his own name. He further states that it was not true that Champagne's middle name was Hubert, as postulated by Ambelain but, by sheer coincidence, that this was the name of his own (Canseliet's) maternal grandfather.

Finally, Canseliet makes the point that the written work of Fulcanelli proclaims sufficiently in itself that its author was a person of exceptional quality - and that any number of authors would have been proud to pass it off as their own.

THE CHEMICAL SYMBOLS

IV

The Praxis

Scientists, especially when they leave the particular field in which they have specialized, are just as ordinary, pig-headed and unreasonable as anybody else, and their unusually high intelligence only makes their prejudices all the more dangerous because it enables them to cover these up with an unusually glib and smooth flow of high-sounding talk.

- H. J. Eysenck: *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology*, (Penguin, 1957)

Theoretical physics has become more and more occult, cheerfully breaking every previously sacrosanct law of nature and leaning towards such supernatural concepts as holes in space, negative mass and time flowing backwards... The greatest physicists... have been groping towards a synthesis of physics and parapsychology.

- Arthur Koestler: *The Roots of Coincidence*, (Hutchinson, 1972.)

AS IT SURVIVES today, alchemy - as indicated earlier - appears to function on three different levels, or in three distinctive schools. One contends that alchemy is a purely psycho-spiritual affair and that actual laboratory experimentation is an elaborate and often meaningless blind. This school would embrace, along with modern Western occultism, the kind of spiritual alchemy that goes under the mantle of sex-magic or Tantricism, or the advanced Yoga techniques of Shakti or Kundalini. Basically, the various glandular secretions of the human body - some, it is claimed, not yet identified by orthodox science - take the roles of the various substances alluded to in the alchemical process. By manipulation, involving

♂	Antimony	♂	Iron
☿	Aqua Fortis	♀	Mercury
☾	Arsenic	☿	Potash
♂ ☿	Calcium	☾	Silver
☿	Charcoal	☿	Sulphur
♀	Copper	☿	Tin
☿	Fire	☿	Vitriol
☿	Gold	☿	Zinc

Fig. 10.

highly developed faculties of posture and meditation and the use of the sex-act as a purely energy-generating technique, the individual is held to undergo a physiological and intellectual transmutation which amounts to Supreme Illumination. Since many of the traditional alchemists worked alone, as we have seen, the idea that alchemy was purely and simply an allegorical form of these Oriental practices is untenable; although it has to be admitted that certain alchemists did work in concert with a female partner who was traditionally termed the *soror mystica* (secret sister.) Flamel's wife, Perronelle, for example, could be said to have fulfilled this role. Yet there is no indication in Flamel's work that he and his wife engaged in any form of sexual magic.

The second surviving school of alchemy proceeds on a physical basis, but with the emphasis on producing therapeutic tinctures with strong homoeopathic-type methods, as in the Swiss Crowleyite fraternity, the work of Archibald Cockren and the public teachings of Frater Albertus. (Although Albertus infers in his work that he has the knowledge of metallic alchemy, he leaves his students to perform their own experiments in vegetable tinctures and, presumably, to find their own way into the metallic field.)

The third school, meanwhile, adheres to the prehistoric and medieval tradition of laboratory alchemy, working with salts and metals and with the object of producing the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir. This latter school also observes the spiritual and religious considerations of its forerunners, thus incorporating some tenets of the first school. It also maintains, along with the 'homoeopaths' of the second, that substance has a 'soul' or 'essence' which can be extracted and concentrated by arcane methods.

It is with this latter, and in my view most important, school that we are concerned here, simply because it seems to combine the true spirit of traditional alchemy with the best of all three alchemical 'worlds.'

As suggested to me by the occultist Walter Lang, it is quite possible that, although the purist field of metallic alchemy and gold-making may have been proscribed for a century or more, this does not rule out a highly important possibility:

That the assumed Higher Powers may have sanctioned the

release of information which can be used to build up a new, alternative medicine which incorporates the therapeutic use of 'natural' ingredients in concentrated form, while doing away with the more gross and mechanical aspects of conventional, allotropic medicine.

As Lang expresses it:

'Thousands of years of folk medicine and some few hundreds of years of science would seem to sanction the idea that Nature provides specific means of *re-tuning* an aberrated human spirit.

'Allopathy may work at the bottom storey, homoeopathy at the second floor and alchemy from the lightning conductor on the roof.

'If a new (but millennially old) science of medical alchemy is about to develop, it will involve a new sophistication upon the old, secret methods of extracting "the soul of substance." Side by side there will have to be a radically new and perhaps at present unbelievable *materia medica*.

'If the alchemical door is now re-opening, I think it will open into the consulting room of a Gnostic physician and not into a bullion vault.'

Lang is not, however, dismissing the concept of physical transmutation entirely; nor the idea of the Philosopher's Stone.

For he adds:

'Until recently physics and chemistry could dismiss accounts of medieval transmutation for a very simple reason. They could say that it was now known that transmutation involves a breach of the atomic nucleus, a manipulation which is impossible without the minimum technology developed by the Manhattan Project. Nuclear fission in 1280 was therefore manifestly absurd.

'Just recently, however, a new idea has emerged - at least for theoretical consideration. It is that transmutation *should* be possible at the level of orbital electrons without nucleus involvement at all. Could this be what the "Philosophers" have been doing for three thousand years all over the world and did for 500 years in Europe?'

That is precisely what the man whom Jacques Bergier took

to be Fulcanelli implied in 1937 – as I have already noted, long before the Manhattan Project got off the ground!

In his *Alchemists & Gold*, Jacques Sadoul cites a remarkable experiment with ordinary hens. They were fed a diet that was totally calcium-free, but were given large doses of mica (aluminium and potassium silicate) instead. To make eggshells, the hens needed calcium but had none. Yet somehow, they managed to lay eggs with calcium shells. In effect, they became alchemists – transmuting potassium ($K = 19$), along with the hydrogen ion ($H = 1$), into calcium ($Ca = 20$).

Although it is outside the scope of this book to attempt to explain in depth the details of the actual alchemical praxis, it is now necessary to outline something of the process, theory and symbolism of the Great Work, so that my ensuing examination of and comments on the work of Fulcanelli in the next chapter may not be entirely misunderstood.

To begin to understand alchemy, it is first of all *essential* to bear in mind that the true Hermetic Art is both a physical and a spiritual occupation. Any attempt to analyse alchemical procedure on a purely orthodox chemical basis will serve no more purpose than a consideration of the Work from an exclusively spiritual standpoint. The two are complementary, inextricably intermingled and one cannot remain wholly valid without the other.

As I believe I have shown in the examples already noted of reputed transmutations, of descriptions of the working equipment and materials and the various procedures given in alchemical texts, the evidence for physical alchemy is overwhelming. Similarly, the affirmation of alchemy's spiritual aspects is also to be found in the countless links with and allusions to mystical, religious and philosophical considerations – again to be found in the standard works on the subject and in alchemy's unquestionable links with secret societies, practical magic and systems like the Sufi Path.

We have already seen that the alchemists began with a consideration of the four basic 'elements' – Fire, Earth, Water and Air. Also that these were considered to possess inherent qualities: Fire, hot and dry; Earth, dry and cold; Water, wet and cold; and Air, hot and wet. A simplified summary of alchemical reasoning is that all it requires to change one

element into another is to alter one of its principle qualities. Thus, if a fire is allowed to die and loses its quality of heat, it becomes earth (dry and cold) in the form of ashes. Similarly, water (cold and wet) when heated, changes into air (hot and wet) in the form of vapour.

By heating and cooling, drying and melting in this way in a seemingly endless series of repetitions, the alchemists believed that they could alter the qualities or basic characteristics of any substance with which they chose to work. No one has satisfactorily explained the apparent necessity for these repetitions. But it is possible that the alchemist was trying to create a kind of stress or fatigue in the structure of his materials, in the hope that it would ultimately result in permanent change. From a spiritual standpoint on the other hand, perhaps he proceeded in this way hoping for the 'right moment' as it were – when the planets, gravity, terrestrial magnetic forces, cosmic rays, meteorological conditions, or even human biological rhythms, were correctly attuned. It may be significant in this sense that alchemy and astrology were almost inextricably fused in the earliest history of the Art, and that each of the major metals was identified with one of the seven known bodies of the Solar System as conceived by the ancients:

Gold (the Sun); Silver (the Moon); Mercury (Mercury); Copper (Venus); Iron (Mars); Tin (Jupiter), and Lead (Saturn).

Because the cosmos which, it will be recalled, was the Greek word for 'order', was considered to have been formed from a primal source (chaos), the alchemists believed that elements of all the planets were present in the earth in varying degrees and quantities, and that the planets themselves influenced the growth or formation of their respective metals within the active crucible of the earth itself.

As Prince Stanislas Klossowski de Rola expresses it:

'It will thus be clear that the alchemical process is a microcosmic reconstitution of the process of creation, in other words a re-creation. It is effected by the interplay of forces symbolized by two dragons, one black and one white, locked in an eternal circular combat. The white one is winged, or volatile, the black one wingless, or fixed; they are accompanied by the universal alchemical formula *solve et*

coagula. This formula and this emblem symbolize the alternating role of the two indispensable halves that compose the Whole. *Solve et coagula* is an injunction to alternate *dissolution*, which is a spiritualization or sublimation of solids, with *coagulation*, that is to say a re-materialisation of the purified products of the first operation. Its cyclic aspect is clearly expressed by Nicolas Valois: "*Solvite corpora et coagulate spiritum*"; "Dissolve the body and coagulate the spirit."¹

These, then, are the basic philosophies underlying the alchemical procedure. But the actual details of the operations and processes to which the various metals were subjected are unimaginably complicated and are made even more abstruse because of two major factors:

1. Each alchemist tried his own experiments by his own methods, or by adapting and modifying techniques from one or more of his predecessors, so that alchemical treatises can vary greatly.

2. In order to maintain the tradition of secrecy, an alchemist would couch his operations in the most complex allegorical and symbolic language. In addition, he might jumble the order of procedure, or miss out key steps in the process. Normally, the Work proceeded through three main stages or Degrees, and often one of these Degrees might be left out of a treatise entirely, without any indication being given of which stage had been omitted – the First, Second or Third Degree.

Only by careful comparison of numerous texts – a laborious process calculated to drive the most patient researcher mad – is it possible to unravel even slightly some of the weird jumble of deliberate misdirection and highly bizarre symbolism. A couple of passages from typical texts should give an idea of what the seeker is up against:

'But when we marry the crowned King to our red daughter, and in a gentle fire, not hurtful she doth conceive an excellent and supernatural son, which permanent life she doth also feed with a subtle heat, so that he lives at length in our fire ... Then he is transformed, and his tincture by help

of the fire remains red, as it were flesh. But our Son, the king begotten, takes his tincture from the fire, and death even, and darkness, and the waters flee away. The Dragon shuns the sunbeams which dart through the crevices and our dead son lives; the king comes forth from the fire and rejoins with his spouse, the occult treasures are laid open, and the virgin's milk is whitened.'

– *Tractatus aureus*, or Golden Tractate of Hermes.

Or again:

'Take the serpent and place it in the chariot with four wheels and let it be turned about on the earth until it is immersed in the depths of the sea, and nothing more is visible but the blackest Dead Sea ... and when the vapour is precipitated like rain ... you should bring the chariot from water to dry land, and then you have placed the four wheels on the chariot and will obtain the result if you will advance further to the Red Sea, running without running, moving without motion.'

– The Tractate of Aristotle to Alexander the Great.

In addition to the Three Degrees, the Great Work was broken down further into lesser stages. Some alchemists maintained that these should number seven, to correspond with the seven planets, metals and days of Creation. They were sometimes known as the Regimen (governance) of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Mercury, etc. Other operators insisted on twelve steps, because twelve was the number of months in a year and there were 12 zodiacal signs through which the planets passed annually.

These twelve steps (incorporating the seven) were known as: calcination, solution, separation, conjunction, putrefaction, coagulation, cibation, sublimation, fermentation, exaltation, multiplication and projection. Other terms, such as cohobation or rectification were also frequently interpolated.

Whatever their names and however many processes might have been applied, the important factor to remember is that the alchemists saw their work as reflective and imitative of the cyclic order of Nature; of the formation, development and eventual dissolution of the All – followed by its natural and

¹ *Alchemy: The Secret Art*, (Thames & Hudson, London, 1973.)

inevitable re-formation. (This may be compared quite favourably with the comparatively recent theory of a Cyclic Universe, which begins as a primal atom containing everything, explodes to form the cosmos, then ultimately collapses back upon itself eventually to repeat the process over again, ad infinitum.) This process similarly applied on a lesser scale to all living entities – including the earth, which went through an obvious cycle of birth, growth, decay, death and re-birth annually. Man himself also followed this assumed pattern of birth, life, death and re-birth.

The alchemist, therefore, saw his Work as a scaled-down, microcosmic reproduction of these great immutable processes and, in a way, saw himself as some kind of exalted being, a demi-god, reproducing in miniature the work of the Great, Unknowable Intelligence behind Life, Nature and the Universe. He sought to plug himself in, as it were, to the Universal Essence and to help Nature along, by speeding up or supplementing this process.

With all these concepts in mind, let us now attempt to follow through the alchemical process from start to finish. Remember, however, that alchemical texts vary enormously. The following can by necessity be only a broad outline of the Work, culled from some of the more intelligible sources. It should also be firmly held in mind that the Philosopher's Stone was intended purely and simply for making the Elixir of Life. The actual experiment in transmutation was only a test to ensure that the Work had succeeded and that the finished product was the true Stone.

Now the greatest barrier facing anyone who decides to attempt the Great Work occurs right at the outset. First, the alchemist must discover what is meant by *prima materia*, or First Matter. Without this knowledge, which must be gained by trial and error, along with deep, intuitive or God-inspired insight, it is simply impossible to begin the Work. The writer de Rola has aptly called this faculty 'innerstanding.'

The classical alchemical writers themselves introduce many blinds and false indications, designed to deter the idle meddler, or even perhaps, the literal materialist since, as we have seen, alchemy may well embrace some method of high-energy manipulation, infinitely more powerful and sophisticated than orthodox nuclear physics.

A 17th-century alchemical manuscript describes First Matter as '... a stone which is not a stone ... like thick, curdling milk, but it is not milk; like mud, but not like any other mud. It resembles a green poisonous thing, because frogs crouch beneath it, but it is not a poison, it is a medicine. In sum, it is the earth from which Adam was fashioned.'

Another alchemist of the same period, Johannes Isaac Hollandus, identifies First Matter as 'vitriol' – although this is clearly not meant to be interpreted literally as sulphuric acid. Vitriol is a cipher, using the system called notariqon, in which the letters spell out the initials of an alchemical instruction: *Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem* (Visit the interior of the earth and by purification you will find the hidden stone.)

Hermann Kopp, a German historian of alchemy, was totally baffled by the hidden meaning of First Matter: 'Substances from the mineral kingdom, different plants and saps, the secretions and excretions of the animal world, even the most disgusting things were subjected to a thorough examination ... They tried milk, but with little faith, and then saliva to see if that was the *prima materia*, and frequently made use of human faeces and urine in their operations.'

Thus were all the non-initiates and charlatans prevented from unravelling the secret of alchemy right at the very start.

Yet, for the determined seeker, all the clues were given.

Many alchemists pointed out that First Matter was all around for those with discerning vision; that it was considered cheap or worthless by the profane. The notariqon of Hollandus is fairly straightforward – it indicates that First Matter is to be found in the earth. The last sentence of the earlier text quoted also suggests that First Matter is some terrestrial substance.

In his *Alchemists & Gold*, Jacques Sadoul, after a careful consideration of alchemical writings, suggests that First Matter is one of eight sulphides. For various reasons too complex to examine here, he decides upon iron pyrites (Fe S_2). Significantly, this contains impurities of antimony – the substance to which Basil Valentine and Artephius drew attention and which later writers such as Lapidus were quick to notice.

In the opinion of the late Jacques Bergier, the alchemists began by mixing three prime ingredients in an agate mortar:

95 per cent of an iron ore, containing impurities such as arsenic or *antimony*; iron, lead, silver or mercury; and an organic acid such as tartaric or citric acid. But in fact, as we shall see, this is jumping the gun somewhat.

The alchemists – again, this must not be taken literally, but as an expression of principles – considered that all matter consisted of three main components or ‘philosophical’ elements. These were philosophic mercury, sulphur and salt. Philosophic mercury was considered solar, hot and male in its nature and philosophic sulphur, lunar, cold and female. Salt was a dual-natured principle which acted as a go-between. Some alchemists envisaged these three principles as symbolic of the spirit, body and soul of man, metal or vegetable matter. Or, if the operator were a Christian, they might be alluded to as reflections of the doctrine of the Trinity: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. From an Eastern standpoint, they could be interpreted as lesser manifestations of *Suyata* (Formless Void), *Maya* (Creation) and *Prana* (Life-Force).

The first step, having determined what First Matter was and obtained it, was to reduce it to a liquid state, in the process known as solution. As we proceed, it will be possible to glimpse the parallel between alchemical operations and the cyclic processes of creation-evolution-destruction-re-creation of the cosmos and the similar birth-life-death-re-birth cycle of Nature and Man; a process which the alchemist hoped would occur within himself just as it took place in his retort or crucible.

The solution of First Matter was effected by a substance known by the alchemists as Secret Fire. This threw up a second blind to the newcomer, because none of the texts identified it clearly. They did, however, give the clue that it was a substance of a dual nature.

It was often described as the ‘water which does not wet the hands’ or the ‘fire which burns without flames’ and for this reason, along with its supposed dual nature, modern interpreters – including Bergier, Sadoul and de Rola – have suggested that Secret Fire is a type of salt in crystalline form, which can be liquefied. Ultimately, these writers conclude that Secret Fire is derived from cream of tartar, prepared in a particular way. Sadoul says that an alchemist of his acquaintance told him

that its preparation – rendering it ‘philosophic’ as opposed to its normal state – depended more on physics than on chemical processes. Meanwhile, de Rola says: ‘In fact, this substance is a salt, prepared from cream of tartar by a process which requires skill and a perfect knowledge of chemistry. The process involves the use of spring dew, collected by ingenious and poetical means and distilled.’²

Not only do these suggestions satisfy the alchemical insistence upon a ‘water which does not wet the hands’, but the latter statement of de Rola also helps to make clear why the alchemists insisted that the Great Work must be begun in Spring – under the astrological signs of Aries or Taurus. Collection of the Spring Dew, from which a salt is extracted by distillation ‘by ingenious and poetical means’, alludes to a method used by the late Armand Barbault.³ His technique was derived from an illustration in the *Mutus Liber* (Silent Book), a classic text by Jacob Sulat, in which the Great Work is outlined by illustrations alone. In Plate IV of the book, two operators – the alchemist and his *soror mystica* – are shown wringing out large canvas sheets into a tub, after collecting dew upon them by stretching the sheets across pegs in a meadow. The same engraving shows a ram (Aries) and a bull (Taurus), signifying the astrologically correct time for collection of this dew (March 21 – May 20).

Barbault used a slightly different method to that indicated in the *Mutus Liber*: he dragged canvas sheets across the dew-laden fields. Barbault even suggested that the actual First Matter, which he interpreted literally as earth pure and simple, had to be sought out by a mystical process involving astrology and some form of clairvoyance. In a metaphysical sense, he inferred that the correct location and portion of earth would ‘seek out’ the operator through the mediumship of his own wife, or *soror mystica*.

To continue with the praxis. As indicated, the First Matter is placed in the mortar, along with the Secret Fire, and pulverised. The result is steeped in further samples of the

² Op cit.

³ *Gold Of A Thousand Mornings*, trans. Robin Campbell, (Neville Spearman Ltd. 1975.)

salt-dew extract, which has been washed several times and crystallised. Bergier suggests that this process of solution should be carried out in polarized light – i.e., light which vibrates in only one direction – such as moonlight.

At this point, the operation is transferred to a crucible for 'triple dissolution', in which the coarse sediment is removed from the mixture and the remaining substance is crushed and pounded, then stirred over a 'gentle fire,' with a steel rod. When half of the salt extracted from the remaining May dew is added, a refinement should take place. This is repeated three times. The result, after repeated sublimations, should be the 'philosophic mercury', which is distinguishable by its distinctive odour.

Archibald Cockren, the noted modern English alchemist, who died in Brighton around 1950, described this unique odour and the phenomena which precede its attainment, as follows:

'The first intimation I had of this triumph was a violent hissing, jets of vapour pouring from the retort and into the receiver like sharp bursts from a machine-gun, and then a violent explosion, whilst a very potent and subtle odour filled the laboratory and its surroundings. A friend has described this odour as resembling the dewy earth on a June morning, with the hint of growing flowers in the air, the breath of the wind over heather and hill, and the sweet smell of the rain on the parched earth.'⁴

Nor could these impressions have been gained through normal channels – since Cockren's laboratory was in Holborn in the City of London!

Similarly, Nicholas Flamel wrote: 'Finally I found that which I desired, which I also soon knew by the strong scent and odour thereof.' And the 14th-century alchemist who wrote under the name of John Cremer also noted: 'When this happy event takes place, the whole house will be filled with a most wonderfully sweet fragrance; then will be the day of the Nativity of this blessed Preparation.'⁵

⁴ *Alchemy Rediscovered & Restored* (Rider & Co., London, 1940.)

⁵ *The Testament of Cremer, in The Hermetic Museum*, ed. A. E. Waite, (J. Elliott & Co., London, 1893.)

Fulcanelli himself describes the somewhat violent phenomena preceding the odour, in *Les Demeures Philosophales*:

'When you hear a sound from the vessel as if water were boiling, turning to a hollow roar like fire tearing the entrails of the earth, be ready to do battle; and keep calm. You will see smoke, with blue, green and violet flames, and hear a series of explosions ...'

Alchemists have warned to beware of flying sparks during this critical phase of the procedure and Jacques Bergier warns the alchemist to be careful not to inhale the toxic gases which are released. He says that mercury vapour and arsenohydrogen have resulted in the deaths of many labourers in the fire at the outset of the Work.

Once the philosophic mercury is safely secured, however, the alchemist is now ready to perform the Second Degree operation. This consists in converting the First Matter into a dual-natured substance, through the joint action of the philosophic mercury and the Virgin's Milk or astral spirit – alternative names for the salt produced from the May dews.

The First Matter is steeped in this spirit and dried and pounded slowly in a mortar with a 'gentle' heat. This latter expression usually signifies a reasonably mild temperature, such as that of a hen hatching an egg, the heat of a sandbath or of natural sunshine – but never the direct heat of a flame, nor of boiling water. The mixture is pounded and more of the Virgin's Milk is slowly added until it has the consistency of a thick paste. This is covered with some of the residual astral spirit and left to stand for about five days.

Next, the liquid is poured into a bottle and stored in a cool place. The residual matter should be sun-dried, then once again subjected to further steeping, pounding, drying and dissolving, each time pouring off any excess liquid into the same bottle and leaving it in the cool for ten days. At length, the entire amount is decanted into a glass vessel called a double pelican – a twin-armed still for constant distillation. (See Fig. 11) Eventually, the whole mass is supposed to blacken and putrefy – the *nigredo* stage – as a result of its own internal heat and fermentation. This residual liquid is distilled without the aid of heat and stored in a sealed glass jar in a damp, cold place.

The black mass remaining in the double-pelican is once more steeped in 'astral spirit' under a gentle heat, then left to dry by itself. This process is repeated until the entire mass is shiny and jet black.

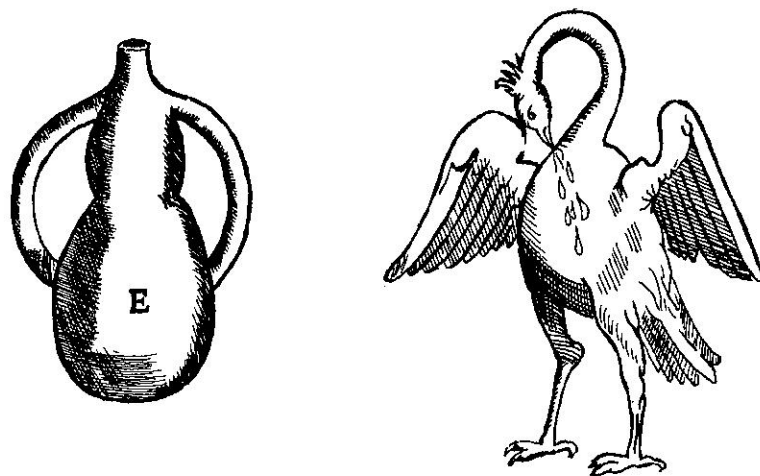


Fig. 11. *left*: the 'double-pelican' flask for repeated distillation. *right*: its symbolic counterpart; once believed to feed its young on its own blood, the pelican became also a Eucharistic Christian symbol.

Again, internal processes are eventually expected to bring this substance to a state of complete putrefaction. Then, once more under the action of gentle heat, it is gradually steeped in the dew until it has absorbed as much as possible.

This has the effect of producing 'philosophers' mercury', as opposed to philosophic mercury of the previous stage. It takes the form of a fine, white ash. The ash is carefully separated from the rest of the substance in the vessel, using either a spoon, a feather or some absorbent material from which it can be wrung, and slowly dissolved in further quantities of the dew-salt until it leaves a black deposit. This must be dissolved and decanted up to nine times, until it turns as white as possible. This is the actual philosophers' mercury, which, like the philosophic mercury of the First Degree, takes the form of a salt.

At this point, actual gold is introduced into the operation,

the object being to extract from it its 'essence' or 'tincture.' This process is known as calcination. First, the gold must be reduced to an oxide, or calx, then washed in distilled rainwater over a low fire. After drying it in natural sunlight, the Secret Fire is applied.

The gold is soaked and pounded thoroughly, then the Secret Fire is added until the gold has absorbed its own weight of the crystalline substance. This mixture is steeped repeatedly until a thick paste results. It is then covered with the residual dew and left in a sandbath for five days. After this the liquid solution is decanted into a sealed storage jar and left in a cold, damp place.

Any of the solid matter which has not dissolved is dried in a gentle temperature - equivalent to natural sunshine - and when dry, the whole process is begun again. The new solution is added to the first and this procedure is continued until nothing remains but 'dead' matter. The liquid residue, which by now should be a bright blue colour, is then stored in the sealed glass jar in a cold spot for ten days. Eventually, through internal action, a black precipitate will form. The liquid floating above it should be separated and stored in a cold place in a sealed jar, while the black substance is left to dry out, then steeped once more in philosophic mercury.

After some forty or fifty days, through internal action, this black precipitate should have absorbed all the liquid in its vessel and coagulated into a whitish ash. External fire is carefully applied until the white colour changes to red.

This done, the matter is placed in an extra-thick jar and philosophers' mercury, dissolved in residual dew, is poured over it while a moderate heat is applied. The philosophic mercury is then added until it covers the mixture. This should have the effect of separating the liquid 'quintessence' which floats about the more solid residue. This liquid is decanted and left in a cold place, until a further separation takes place, the remaining solids in the mixture sinking to the bottom of the vessel. When the liquid floating on top of this deposit is carefully decanted, the remaining substance can be thrown away.

The liquid left is the first tincture of gold - the highly therapeutic 'drinkable gold'. But it is *not* the Elixir.

This oil can be taken in minute homoeopathic dosages, either as a liquid, powder or salt. But at least half of it should be separated and kept in an air-tight phial for use in the Third Degree of the Work.

It should be dried naturally until it becomes a powder, which is divided into equal halves, one of which is dissolved in a proportion of 1:4 of philosophic mercury. This will be used in the Third Degree to steep the remaining half of the powder.

Rebis is the name for this double-purpose, double-natured powder which, in the Third Degree, must be 'perfected' by a process known as coction. This consists in applying a precisely regulated heat, and it is at this stage that great care must be taken or the whole work is lost and must be begun all over again. This, probably more than any other factor, is why so many alchemists spent years attempting to produce the Stone, in the face of constant faltering and failure.

The *rebis*, which still contains the gold introduced into the operation, is heated on a furnace. Modern alchemists, however, have used thermostatically controlled electric hot-plates. Continued heating of the *rebis*, along with the philosophic mercury, is said eventually to produce an effect within the glass vessel which has been compared to the rise and fall of mist and dew. At length, the more solid substance of the *rebis* is held to take on some quality of the liquid philosophic mercury while, likewise, the mercury surrenders some of its volatility to a more fixed, or solid state. About the twentieth day, a series of vivid colours should manifest in succession - a phenomenon which has been likened by the alchemical writers to the colours of the peacock's tail, or those of the rainbow. Finally, the whole substance in the bottom of the vessel turns the deepest black.

During the next stage, sometimes known as the Regimen of Saturn - signifying old age, death and decomposition - the black substance alternately appears dry and lifeless, then boils and bubbles like melted tar. Once this putrefaction stage is past, which takes up to forty days and nights, a whole new sequence of colours manifests over a period of three weeks, terminating in the substance glowing vivid white in the form of tiny capillaries around the sides of the vessel.

Continued heating will cause the matter to undergo a

multitude of changes and, judging from the descriptions of this stage in the Work, the operator often imagined he saw all kinds of shapes, changes and undulations, which were frequently compared to natural phenomena, such as the motion of the sea, the Milky Way, or the lights of the *aurora borealis*. This is succeeded by the mass turning to tiny white grains, which appear to have a luminescence of their own.

Now, slightly more heat is applied. Because of the antiquity of most alchemical texts, no specific gradations could be given, although most recipes say that the heat should not be sufficient to cause the matter to melt and adhere to the sides of the vessel. (The modern alchemist Lapidus cites 150-170°F as the absolute maximum temperatures permissible.) Further colour progressions will ensue: copper, azure, leaden and pale purple. After another forty-day period, the matter should turn a pleasant shade of green, which was taken as a sign that the substance was ready to regenerate itself.

Orange, yellow and a darkish lemon colour follow, eventually passing rapidly once again through the 'peacock's tail' sequence, until the subject matter turns dry. After thirty days, it should be tinged an orange shade which, over a two-week period, will permeate the whole of the substance in the vessel.

When this orange takes on a definite golden hue and the Virgin's Milk in which it is immersed is a deep orange, the end of the Work is near. Within twelve to fourteen days, the 'philosophic gold' will be quite moist, then eventually, around the twenty-sixth day, it will appear to dry out, to liquefy and congeal once more. This cycle continues rapidly until the entire mass turns gritty and seems to break up into minute granules. It will solidify into a single mass, break up again, reform - and so on for about two weeks.

Ultimately - and this is the stage when the alchemists emphasize the necessity of some element of divine or spiritual intervention - the matter will become blindingly bright, breaking up into small particles and finally turning extremely dark red, like congealed blood.

This is the Philosopher's Stone.

But it still has to be 'perfected' or 'multiplied.' This means putting it through the entire process right from the point where the *rebis* and philosophic mercury were submitted to the fire.

This done, the Stone is perfected. With four parts of gold to one part of the Stone, a powder is prepared which will allow transmutation. The powdered stone, which looks like saffron-coloured crystals, may now also be used as a tincture or elixir, to be taken twice a year.

Remember, however, that the above account of the Great Work has been digested from the works of several different alchemists and that no single operator has ever given the entire process in its correct order. And even when they have provided seemingly precise instructions, there are stages at which the procedures are not absolutely clear and must be deduced by the seeker himself through careful experiment.

It will be seen that the process takes a considerably long time – anything up to three years – even if carried out correctly. It is also a highly costly affair – a factor which must be taken into account when considering the identity of Fulcanelli.

Although I have outlined the Work in as simple language as possible, it should also be remembered that the alchemists used highly colourful and fanciful allegorical language in delineating their procedures, invoking such mythical imagery as the phoenix rising from its ashes (symbol of regeneration), the griffin (half eagle, half lion, representing a combination of the volatile and the fixed), the ouroboros (serpent biting its tail, signifying the cyclic nature of the work and infinity), the bi-sexual androgyne (the *rebis* or dual-natured substance, and the image of the Perfected Being), the raven, unicorn, salamander, basilisk, dragon and many many more. To deter the unworthy, the names of the ‘philosophic’ substances were interchanged quite arbitrarily, so that when ‘our mercury’ is mentioned it might well mean something else entirely.

Yet it is possible through careful study to see that the Art was intended to mirror the great creative processes of the cosmos and terrestrial Nature – with a closer spiritual affinity to these forces than any other religious or mystical doctrine. It was fervently hoped that the alchemical procedure and its transformations would be reflected in the alchemist himself, bringing about a cleansing process of mind and spirit and eradicating all mundane and preconceived notions and ideas.

The entire alchemical philosophy is probably best summed up in the words of Novalis:

‘Any descent within oneself – any look within – is at the same time an Ascent – an Assumption – a look towards the true reality without. The renunciation of oneself is the source of all humility, as well as the basis of any true ascent. The first step is a look within, an exclusive contemplation of our very self. But he who stops there remains halfway. The second step must be an efficacious look without, an active, autonomous and persevering observation of the outside world ...

‘We shall understand the world when we understand ourselves; for it and we are inseparable halves of one whole. We are children of God, divine seeds. One day, we shall be what our Father is.’⁶

It is clear that the alchemist attempted to place himself back into a state of total innocence or Grace – the condition of Adam before the Fall. Then he would be in readiness for a great awakening, somewhat similar – but infinitely more profound – to the meditational Yogic methods of stilling the mind to prepare it for illumination.

Not for nothing was the alchemical aphorism coined: *Ars totum requirit hominem* (The art requires the whole man.)

True alchemy is a path towards hidden reality, which contains all the absolute underlying truths of life, religion, beauty, generation and the vital sustaining spirit of the universe itself. The successful alchemist would penetrate the secrets of Life and Death, of Nature, of Cosmic Awareness, Oneness, Eternity and Infinity. He would become godlike.

Nowhere, perhaps, is this better expressed than in Walter Scott’s translation of the *Corpus Hermeticum*, in a passage which reads:

‘If then you do not make yourself equal to God, you cannot apprehend God; for like is known by like. Leap clear of all that is corporeal, and make yourself grow to a like expanse with that greatness which is beyond all measure; rise above all time, and become eternal; then you will apprehend God. Think that for you too nothing is impossible; deem that you too are immortal, and that you are able

⁶ Quoted by Stanislas Klossowski de Rola, *op cit*.

to grasp all things in your thought, to know every craft and every science; find your home in the haunts of every living creature; make yourself higher than all the heights, and lower than all depths; bring together in yourself all opposites of quality, heat and cold, dryness and fluidity; think that you are everywhere at once, on land, at sea, in heaven; think that you are not yet begotten, that you are in the womb, that you are young, that you are old, that you have died, that you are in the world beyond the grave; grasp in your thought all this at once, all times and places, all substances and qualities and magnitudes together; then you can apprehend God.⁷

To all alchemy's critics and detractors, I would respectfully suggest that no nobler system of philosophy or mysticism has ever been offered to mankind. And to the orthodox sceptical chemist who might insist that the process described above would not produce the results claimed for it, I can only ask:

'What do you know of spirituality, of mystical philosophy?'

And, most important of all: 'Have you tried it?'

Let us now look at the work of one man who undoubtedly could answer in the affirmative: Fulcanelli.

V

Fulcanelli The Alchemist

It has long been believed that the Gothic cathedrals were secret textbooks of some hidden knowledge; that behind the gargoyles and the glyphs, the rose windows and the flying buttresses, a mighty secret lay, all but openly displayed.

This is no longer a theory.

- Walter Lang: Introduction to *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1971.)

THE IDEA of Gothic, or even much more ancient architecture having a hidden symbolic meaning, being a secret language in stone and proportion, was by no means an original conceit or notion exclusive to Fulcanelli. The ancient pyramids of Giza themselves have been interpreted as repositories of arcane and sacred wisdom by many writers, myself included.¹

Indeed, Fulcanelli himself acknowledges many sources in justifying his interpretation of Europe's monumental 'cabala.' He quotes, for example, J. F. Colfs' *La Filiation généalogique de toutes les Ecoles gothiques*, of 1884:

'The language of stones, spoken by this new art, is at the same time clear and sublime, speaking alike to the humblest and most cultured heart.'

Yet despite these and other confirmations from expert archivists, the thesis of Fulcanelli has, outside occult circles, largely been ignored or rejected down to the present day. Perhaps it was Fulcanelli's insistence that edifices like Notre-Dame of Paris and Amiens Cathedral were so specific in their symbolism that has prompted even seasoned contemporary

⁷ *Corpus Hermeticum*, trans. Walter Scott, 4 vols., (Oxford 1924-36)

¹ See my *The Ancient Magic of the Pyramids*, (Corgi, 1978.)

occultists like Francis King (not to be confused with the novelist), to write:

'He [Fulcanelli] held that the secrets of alchemy, from the identification of the mysterious First Matter to the technique of transmutation, were expressed in the cathedrals that "behind the gargoyles and glyphs, the windows and the flying buttresses, a mighty secret lay, all but openly displayed ... wholly unsuspected by the profane, the Gothic cathedrals have for seven hundred years offered European man a course of instruction in his own possible evolution."

'From any ordinary point of view such a belief is nonsensical. Whatever may or may not have been the reason for the builders of the cathedrals adopting a cruciform ground plan - and the obvious reason for this is almost certainly the correct one - it seems quite certain that Fulcanelli's suggestion that it was to "indicate the qualities of the First Matter" was eccentric to the point of lunacy.'²

In fact, as can be seen from the fragment at the head of this chapter, in the first quotation, King is not using Fulcanelli's own words. They are from Walter Lang's Introduction to the 1971 translation into English of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* and were incorporated in the jacket notes - an indication that King had not perhaps studied the book quite so carefully on first reading. In another place, King refers to Lang - whom inadvertently he has called 'eccentric to the point of lunacy' - as 'one of the few serious contemporary students of alchemy.'

Secondly, Fulcanelli does not insist that the cross-shaped layout of cathedrals was designed *solely* to indicate the qualities of First Matter. The alchemist makes it quite clear that the system of 'cabala' he employs - not to be confused with the traditional Hebrew Qabalah - allows for varied interpretation, both exoteric and esoteric. In fact, quite early in *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, Fulcanelli states that the grandiose architectural harmony of form and proportion expressed in Gothic architecture is 'not concerned *entirely* with religious observance.' (My italics.)

² Article, *The Elusive Fulcanelli*, in *Man, Myth & Magic: Frontiers of Belief*, Issue 90, (Purnell, 1970-1972.)

He writes of the way in which the cathedral was a gathering place used by people from all walks of life - both philosophically and professionally - other than for strictly orthodox religious observance, such as the mass, funerals, baptism, saints' festivals, etc. Significantly, he mentions a medieval 'hermetic fair' - a Feast of Fools or, as he says, of the Wise - and talks of the way in which the orthodox clergy were kept ignorant of its true, inner meaning, its hidden symbolism of a 'disguised Science.' His equation of 'Fools' and 'Wise' demonstrates at least some awareness of the multiple meaning of arcane terminology - as in the Arabic root-words such as 'fahm' - 'black, wise,' etc., to which I referred earlier in a Sufic context.

A careful study of Fulcanelli's writings demonstrates quite clearly that he is in no way speculating, even though his exposition of ancient, half-forgotten customs and symbols may at first appear abstruse and irrelevant. He notes, for example, that G. J. Witkowski, in *L'Art profane a l'Eglise* (Paris, 1908), writes of a bas-relief on the capital of a great pillar in the nave of Notre-Dame of Strasbourg, which shows a bawdy, possibly even blasphemous procession: a pig carrying a holy stoup, donkeys dressed as priests, a fox in a shrine with gift-bearing monkeys. Fulcanelli identifies it as the Procession of the Fox, or Feast of the Donkey - a medieval fete with hidden meaning - depicted in a still-extant MS in the Bibliothèque Nationale. (He also mentions a 'strange *Ball Game*' played inside Saint-Etienne Cathedral, Auxerre, until 1538, 'when the custom died out.' Again, this points to a knowledge on his part of the type of culture components which emerged from Saracen Spain through Hebrew and Sufi influence.)

Following Victor Hugo, he calls Notre-Dame of Paris 'the Philosophers' Church' and evokes a picture of 14th-century alchemists meeting there every Saturday to compare notes and cites the adept Denis Zachaire's confirmation that this custom continued at least until 1539.

It is not beyond the realms of possibility - judging from his lively and colourful reconstruction of such scenes - that Fulcanelli himself developed some extra-sensitive faculty which enabled him to pick up these age-old impressions left permeating the very fabric of the buildings he examined. As Walter

Lang has frequently reminded me, many occultists 'from time to time find a door accidentally opening and start to go it alone,' but that few seekers are sufficiently advanced or properly initiated to take full advantage of such insights. He also emphasizes that genuine 'school operations' - of the type initiated by the Masters of the Spanish schools - 'are invisible while they are happening and only become visible afterwards when somebody finds some embers in the campfire of a caravan that has passed on.'

Whatever his methods, Fulcanelli succeeded in savouring the flavour of those medieval times when a church or cathedral was not merely a sanctuary for faithful, orthodox worshippers, but a gathering-place, a philosophical 'stock exchange', where lingering pockets of arcana, with roots in pre-Christian systems, were practically flouted under the noses of an unsuspecting, undiscerning clergy.

Fulcanelli regrets the vandalism of iconoclasts and of well-meaning but inept 'restorers' of parts of Notre-Dame, who have unwittingly erased much of the original symbolism. But he observes that, despite such ravages, some of the secret meanings of the rose-windows, pointed arches, gargoyles and bas-reliefs are still perceptible to those with the correct viewpoint and knowledge.

The Master Alchemist defines 'Gothic' not as an allusion to the Goths, the ancient Germanic race, but as a phonetic, cabalistic cipher which has been debased over the centuries. Its linguistic 'cabalistic' origin, he says, is 'argotique', or cant - not 'art gotique,' (which has the same pronunciation). He therefore argues that the cathedral is a work of 'art goth' or rather 'argot', meaning cant or slang. He quotes the dictionary definition of 'argot' as 'a language peculiar to all individuals who wish to communicate their thoughts without being understood by outsiders.'

Unlike the Hebrew Qabalah, with its numerological affiliations, Fulcanelli's 'cabala' is essentially a spoken system, its meanings hidden in phonetic similarities and allusions to alternative interpretations. In his Preface to the Second Edition of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, M. Eugene Canseliet describes it as a 'forceful idiom' which he says Cyrano de Bergerac called the 'instinct' or 'voice of Nature.' He points out that 'cabala'

derives from the Latin *caballus*, meaning horse, while Qabalah is a Hebrew word which may be loosely rendered as 'tradition.' The horse-derivation is by no means arbitrary; it quite clearly refers to the origins of Chivalry - *cheval* (horse)-ry - in Sufic lore.

Under phonetic law, says Fulcanelli, no attention is paid to spelling - sound and meaning are paramount.

Thus he links the 'argotiers' or users of this system of slang or cant with the hermetic descendants of the 'argonauts', whom he says spoke the 'langue argotique' on their quest for the Golden Fleece. All initiates, Fulcanelli states, spoke in cant - including the Masons who built the cathedrals and who were the operative predecessors of today's speculative Freemasons. Eventually, he maintains, the 'langue verte' or 'green language' (green, it will be recalled, being the colour of Initiation in the secret societies referred to earlier) became the mode of speech of the poor, humble and oppressed. An indication of this fact can be discerned in the use of 'rhyming slang' among London's Cockneys, or in the jargon of 'hip' or 'jive-talk' originally derived from American negro blues artists and other musicians.

Fulcanelli says:

'It remains the language of a minority of individuals, living outside accepted laws, conventions, customs and etiquette. The term *voyous* (street-arabs), that is to say *voyants* (seers), is applied to them and the even more expressive term, *sons or children of the sun*. Gothic art is in fact the *art got* or *cot* - (χ^0) - the *art of light* or of the spirit.'

Fulcanelli goes on to refer *argot*, or cant, to the *Language of the Birds*, which he says is the parent and doyen of all other languages - 'the one spoken by philosophers and *diplomats*.' He says this language of the spirit was the one which unveils hidden truths: that used by Christ to his Apostles, the *Court Language* of the ancient Incas, the *Gay Science*, the *Language of the Gods* of the Middle Ages.

It is an incontestable fact that most major religious and philosophical systems down to ancient times had both an exoteric and an esoteric corpus of teaching. This is best demonstrated in Christian terms in Matthew 13, 10 and 11:

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?

And he answered and said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.

Aside from cant, Fulcanelli says, strains of the 'secret language' remain today in the dialects of Romanies and of Picard and Provençal.

Using this form of linguistic decipherment, Fulcanelli identifies the cruciform ground-plan of gothic churches as an allusion not only to the Cross of Christ, but to the alchemical crucible. In archaic French, the word was *cruzol*, later *croiset* and *crucible*, derived from the Latin *crucibulum*, which in turn had its roots in *crux*, *crucis*, meaning cross. This relationship, he says, is also cemented by the fact that the First Matter of the alchemist must undergo a similar process in the crucible to the ordeal of Christ: torture, death, resurrection, transformation. And he points up the ancient significance of the pre-Christian nature of the cross symbol, representing the four elements, the four cardinal points, etc.

The elliptical apses of cathedrals, he points out, serve to convert the cruciform ground-plan to the Egyptian *ankh*, ♀, or *crux ansata*, symbol of universal life enshrined in matter. This, he maintains, became none other than the alchemical symbol for Venus or Cypris (Greek: the impure), or common copper: ♀

The 'sign of the Cross' therefore, says Fulcanelli, indicates the qualities of First Matter and the path the alchemist must follow to attain the first stage of the Work. In similar, phonetical association, he expounds the use of the word 'stone' (French: *pierre*) in both Christian and Hermetic doctrine - corner-stone, Simon-called-Peter (*Pierre*), etc.

Writing of the floor-decoration of gothic edifices, Fulcanelli draws attention to the mazes or labryriths often incorporated in ceramic mosaic fashion 'at the point of intersection of the nave and the transepts.' He cites the churches of Sens, Rheims, Auxerre, St. Quentin, Poitiers and Bayeux as having preserved their maze designs intact. These mazes, it is to be noted, formed a distinctive part of the symbolic culture-motifs of the

Spanish schools and were expressed physically in Spanish Gardens as actual mazes.

The labyrinth, says Fulcanelli, is a Hermetic emblem of the Great Work's two main stumbling blocks: the order or direction of procedure and the method. Using his familiar technique of linking linguistic similarity and parallel symbolism in ancient mythology, Fulcanelli traces the nature of the emblematic labyrinth via Ariadne (who left her thread for 'Theseus in the maze at Knossos) through the Greek association of the spider (arachnid) with *αἰσώ*, meaning to draw or attract - and on to the magnetic lodestone. This, he says, is a virtue enshrined within the human body. He relates the Provençal word for iron (*aran*, *iran*) to the Masonic Hiram, architect of Solomon's Temple. He also identifies the Greek lodestone to the rising sun, and points out that the name of the temple of Knossos in Crete (discovered by Evans in 1902), was *Absolum* - phonetically similar to Absolute, goal of the Philosopher, the Stone itself.

Louis Charpentier, in *The Mysteries of Chartres Cathedral*,³ has this to say of the mazes of gothic architecture:

'Much has been said about the symbolism of these labyrinths. It is beyond doubt alchemical, but one cannot fail to notice that the labyrinth at Chartres (no more than those at Amiens, and, formerly, at Rheims) is not a labyrinth properly speaking, since it is impossible to get lost in it because there is only one path and it leads to the centre. All known labyrinths in a Notre-Dame shew this same path, which is thus *fixed* and not left to the master-craftsman or the master-paviour. This implies that it was regarded as essential that the men who worked on a "daedalus" should follow a given plan, one path and not another. Let there be no doubt that this path must be taken in rhythm, according to a ritual. But a ritual progress is not a mere walk; it is a dance. A labyrinth is a dance-pattern written on the ground; a reasoned version of the qualities of the round or circle.' (Daedalus was the reputed designer of King Minos' maze at Knossos.)

³ trans. Sir Ronald Fraser & Janette Jackson (Research Into Lost Knowledge Organisation, Thorsons Publishers Ltd., 1972.)

Further on, Charpentier says: 'The man who reaches the centre of the labyrinth, having made the ritual progress through it and having "danced", is changed and for all I know in the sense that there has been an opening of the intuition to natural laws and harmonies; to laws and harmonies that he will perhaps not understand but which he will experience in himself, with which he will feel in tune and which will be for him the best test of truth as the diapason is the "test" for a musician.' (See Fig. 12)

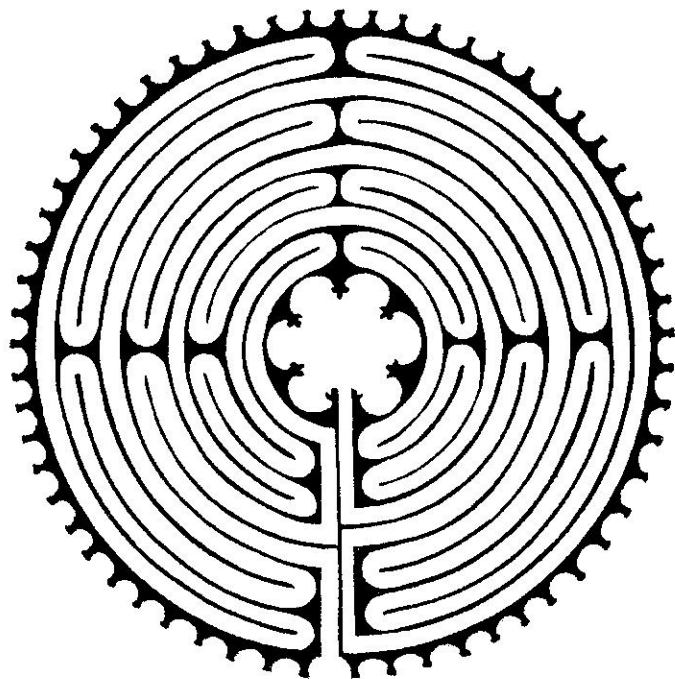


Fig. 12. The Maze of Chartres Cathedral: there is only one correct path (after Charpentier).

Fulcanelli himself goes on to suggest that the orientation of most churches - apses facing south-east, entrance towards the north-west, transept-arms pointing north-east, and south-west - is intended to direct visitors to follow a symbolic, ritual path. Thus, entering from the west, they face the direction of

the rising sun (east) and, in a symbolic sense, walk out of darkness into light. He says that the positioning of the three rose windows of gothic churches - in each transept-end and in the main entrance porch - creates a lighting effect calculated to demonstrate the basic colour progressions of the Great Work, as the sun moves from east to west. Thus, the north-eastern rose window in the left-hand transept is in perpetual shade (*nigredo* - the blackening, or putrefaction); the south-western, at the end of the right-hand transept, catches the full midday sun (*albedo* - the whitening, or regeneration and rebirth); the north-western catches the glow of the setting sun (*rubedo* - the reddening, or exaltation and final perfection.)

The Master also teaches that the *rota* - the name given to the central rose-window of cathedral porches - signified the wheel, the circular or cyclic nature of the Work, the time taken, the repetition of certain processes and the sustained, unvarying heat required. He relates the six-petaled rose incorporated in some window designs - notably at Lyons, Toue, Abbeville and Rouen - to the six-rayed star of the Magi and the hexagram, or six-pointed Seal of Solomon: \star .

'Some roses,' he writes, 'emblematic of a certain compound, have a particular meaning, which underlines still further the properties of this *substance*, which the *creator has sealed* with his own hand. This *magic seal* reveals to the artist that he has followed the right road and that the philosophical mixture has been prepared according to *canon law*.' (Fulcanelli's italics.)

The student of alchemy must study for himself Fulcanelli's further expositions of the nature and meaning of this star and its material equivalent in the Great Work. My main aim in this examination of his written work is to indicate the depth and extent of the Alchemist's knowledge and learning.

The Cult of the Black Virgin

The mysterious 'Black Virgin' statues found in the crypts of many European gothic churches are derived, Fulcanelli says, from the Egyptian goddess Isis and usually bear the inscription: *Virgini Pariturae*, 'to the Virgin about to give birth.' In Hermetic symbolism, he says, the Black Virgin represents the

virgin earth 'which the artist must choose as the *subject* of his Great Work.'

It was because of this connection with the earth, he adds, that these curious statues were normally found in crypts. He describes several examples - at Chartres, Puy, Marseilles, Rocadamour, Vichy and Quimper. Fulcanelli equates Isis and her veiled mysteries with the pre-Christian cults of Ceres and Cybele and emphasizes that revelation of these secret practices was punishable by death.

As Isis was the great Virgin Mother-Goddess who gave birth to all Nature, so the matter in the alchemist's vessel will, following its blackening stage, give birth to a new substance in the course of the Great Work.

Notre-Dame of Paris

Fulcanelli embarks upon his verbal guided-tour of gothic architectural and hermetic symbolism by describing the former state of Notre-Dame of Paris, the damage done by vandals and ignorant restorers. He writes of the removal and destruction of several important statues described in various archives and, in one instance, identifies St. Christopher bearing the infant Christ as Chrysopher: *he who carries gold*.

He expresses his disdain for the Renaissance: the earlier, medieval artists, sculptors and architects, he says, created purely for truth and ideals, while those of the Renaissance ('paradoxical name') built merely for their own future glorification.

He says: 'The former was an idea; the latter, a fashion.'

The pier, dividing the entrance bay of the great portal of Notre-Dame, Fulcanelli observes, bears the figure of 'Alchemy' personified; it is a woman, her head touching the clouds, seated on a throne. In her right hand is a sceptre, denoting royal power, in her left two books, one opened, symbolising the exoteric teachings, the other closed, noting the esoteric nature of wisdom. A nine-runged ladder, resting against her chest, he says, represents the nine successive operations of the Work. (See Fig. 13)

He equates Notre-Dame and its stone symbolism with the famous wordless alchemical classic volume, the *Mutus Liber*.

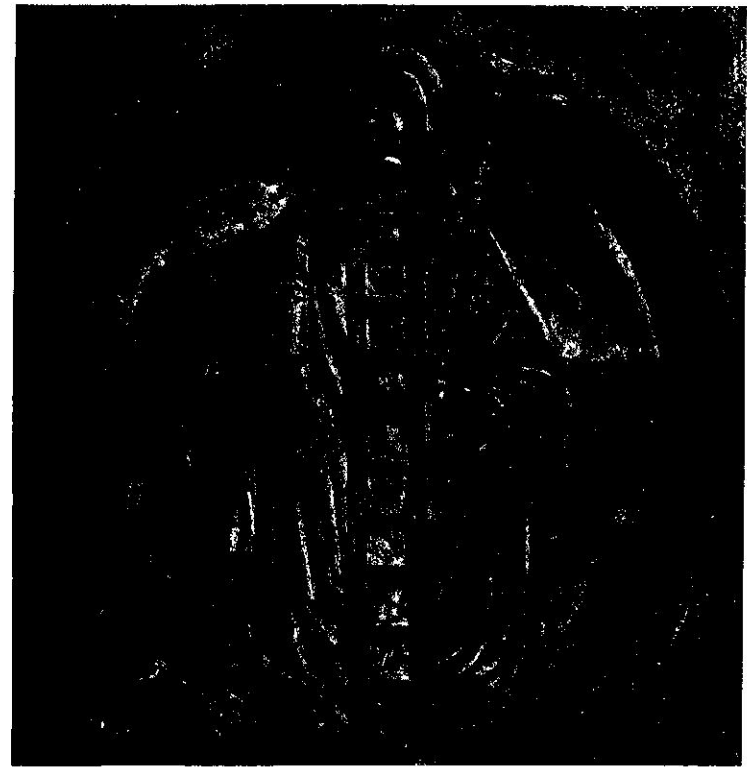


Fig. 13. Alchemy - Notre-Dame de Paris.

This female personification of Alchemy on Notre-Dame's porch, he says, is in effect the title-page, proclaiming the nature of the secrets hidden symbolically within. (In the later editions of Fulcanelli's works, published by Jean-Jacques Pauvert of Paris, this symbol became the Alchemist's logo - and that of his pupil, Eugene Canseliet.)

Returning to the theme of the Virgin Mary or Mother, (Latin: *mater, matrix*) Fulcanelli says she is none other than First Matter - earth in its primal chaotic state - which is why she was regarded as immaculately conceived, a pure creation of God. He points out that the Bible says Mary was of the stem of Jesse and that the Hebrew *Jes* means fire. Taking this as a solar fire, he thus shows that the name Jesus is synonymous with fire, the sun (son) of God.

Throughout his exposition of the meanings of gothic symbolism in alchemical terms, Fulcanelli is by no means purely arbitrary in his attributions. He quotes freely from the classic alchemists, most notably Bernard Trevisan, Denis Zacheire, Nicholas Flamel, Basil Valentine, Salomon Trismosin, Artepheus, John Pontanus, Philalethes, The Cosmopolite, Arnold of Villanova, Raymond Lully, Geber, Khunrath, Ripley, Cyliani and Cambriel.

He says that in the basement of the facade below the three porches of Notre-Dame can be found in stone the name of the First Matter, the processing of the Secret Fire and, step by step, the work of making the Elixir, from calcination to coction. But he says significantly, 'we shall always observe the order in which the figures succeed one another,' which might well imply that this is not necessarily the order of operation in the Work itself.

Obviously, there is insufficient space in this work to interpret, step by step, Fulcanelli's progressive analysis of Notre-Dame's stone glyphs. Only intensive personal study of Fulcanelli's books might lead to a proper understanding of the alchemical processes he sets out.

Yet, it can be said that in one section (pp. 107-108, English edition) he gives what I believe to be a highly important clue to what constitutes the *universal spirit*, or alchemical *sulphur*, which he says is 'embodied in minerals' and 'constitutes the principle and effective agent of all metallic tinctures.'

Yet he warns:

'But one cannot obtain this *Spirit* ... except by decomposing what nature had first assembled in them. It is, therefore, necessary that the body should perish, that it should be crucified and should die, if one wishes to extract the *soul*, the *metallic life*, and the *celestial Dew*, imprisoned therein. And this quintessence, transfused into a pure, fixed and perfectly digested body, will give birth to a new creature, more splendid than any of those from which it proceeds. The bodies have no action on one another; the spirit alone is active.'

Immediately following this, Fulcanelli notes significantly that Thomas Corneille, in his *Dictionnaire des Arts et des Sciences*, (art. Rose-Croix, Paris, Coignard, 1731), says that the grand masters of the Rose-Cross were called *Frères de la Rosée Cuite* (Brothers of the Boiled Dew), 'a meaning which they themselves gave to the initials of their order, F.R.C.'

Indeed, Frances A. Yates, in *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment*⁴ refers to this interpretation of the origin of the name, Rosicrucian. Although in writing of the theory, she says it was argued that the derivation was from the Latin *Ros* (dew) and *Crux* 'having an alchemical meaning connected with dew as a (supposed) solvent of gold and with the cross as the equivalent of light.' She refers the reader to James Crossley, *Diary and Correspondence of Dr. John Worthington* (Chetham Society, 1847.)

Fulcanelli adds:

'I would like to be able to say more on this extremely important subject and to show how the *Dew of May* (Maia was the mother of Hermes) - the life-giving humidity of the month of *Mary, the Virgin-Mother*, can easily be extracted from a particular body, which is abject and despised and whose characteristics I have already described. There are, however, bounds which may not be overstepped ... We are touching on the greatest secret of the Work and I must remain true to my vow.'

However, the interested student would be well advised to

⁴ (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1972.)

study carefully what Fulcanelli has to say earlier (pp. 73-75, English edition) about milk and blood and the 'subject of the Wise.'

Fulcanelli relates it to the *Verbum dimissum* of Trevisan, the Lord Word of medieval freemasons, what all the hermetic fraternities were hoping to find.'

The Dry Method.

Fulcanelli claims that a single motif on the Porch of St. Anne describes the 'shortest practice of our Science' - the mysterious Dry Way, said to be much shorter and less expensive, though more difficult to achieve, than the Humid or Moist Way described in my previous chapter.

He quotes Grillot de Givry, *Le Grand Oeuvre* (Paris, Chacornac, 1907):

'See sculptured on the right portal of Notre Dame of Paris, the bishop perched above an athanor, where the philosophical mercury, chained in limbo, is being sublimated. It teaches the origin of the sacred fire; and the Chapter of the cathedral, by leaving this door closed all the year in accordance with a secular tradition, shows that this is *not the vulgar way*, but one unknown to the crowd and reserved for the small number of the elite of Wisdom.'

In a footnote, Fulcanelli says: 'At St. Peter's, Rome, the same door, called the Holy Door or Jubilee Door, is gilded and walled up. Once every twenty-five years, or four times in a century, the Pope opens it with a hammer.'

He goes on to describe how the Notre-Dame carving, the base of which alone is, he says, hermetic, has been mutilated by so-called restoration. On the base, which depicts an athanor, dragon and triple-crowned boy-king, the hermetic emblems have been replaced by Roman flourishes.

Here, the integrity and motivations of Fulcanelli as a true hermetic philosopher are demonstrated. He shows how the alchemist François Cambriel - over-zealously, perhaps - falsified his description of the statue of St. Marcellus atop this particular plinth.

Fulcanelli remarks: 'The science which we are studying is just as positive, as real and as exact as optics, geometry or mechanics; its results are as tangible as those of chemistry ... Let us remember that it was the roguery of the greedy puffers, the senseless practices of the charlatans, the foolishness of ignorant and unscrupulous writers which brought discredit to the hermetic truth. One must have a right view and fitting speech. There must not be a word, which has not been weighed up, not a thought which has not been sifted by judgement and reflection. Alchemy asks to be purified; let us free it from the blemishes made on it, sometimes even by its own partisans. It will emerge all the stronger and healthier, without losing any of its charm or its mysterious attraction.'

Fulcanelli ends his section on Notre-Dame of Paris with a description of a painted coat-of-arms ascribed to St. Thomas Aquinas - and reproduced in his book - in which he demonstrates his knowledge of the language of heraldry and its links with the alchemical art.

Notre-Dame of Amiens.

Fulcanelli next makes a summary comparison of the alchemical symbols depicted on shields at Amiens Cathedral with those shown on discs or roundels at Paris. Again, he clearly shows the superior refinement of his powers of observation, interpretation and knowledge of the stone-sculptor's art and symbolic language, over that of orthodox writers and historians. This is especially apparent in his interpretation of a figure he calls the 'Fire of the Wheel' on the Porch of the Saviour, which other commentators had seen as a depiction of Ezekiel and the fiery Wheels. He decodes the bas-relief as symbolic of the Philosopher, his most difficult labours over, keeping watch over the 'two revolutions, which must act in succession on the compound, in order to ensure for it the first degree of perfection.' This equates with his explanation of the term 'rota' earlier - the great circular process of evolution which the matter in the crucible must undergo.

Throughout his whole exposition of the various carved symbols and their meaning in the Great Work, Fulcanelli

constantly gives the strong impression of a *practical* working knowledge of the alchemical procedures involved, the detailed results they bring about and the significance of the various colours, weights and temperatures necessary to perfect the Art.

Bourges.

In this section of his book, Fulcanelli, in interpreting certain symbolic decorations on the house of the silversmith Jacques Coeur (whom he obviously considers an Adept), shows his awareness of the initiatory pilgrimages of the Middle Ages and the significance of the pilgrim's scallop-shell and staff, synonymous with St. James of Compostella. He equates the name of St. James - whose emblem is a scallop-shell - with '*compos stella*' (having possession of the star), enshrining the nature of First Matter. And he mentions the 'symbolic journey' of Nicholas Flamel to 'Monsieur James of Galicia.'

'This is where all alchemists must begin,' he says. 'With the pilgrim's staff as a guide, and the scallop shell as a sign, they must take this long and dangerous journey, half of which is on land and half on water. Pilgrims first, then pilots.'

Here, of course he may be alluding to the need for a balance of solid and liquid materials, the fixed and the volatile, the physical and the spiritual. The latter sentence appears to indicate that once the aspirant has mastered the praxis, he may then become a teacher, leading others along the alchemical path.

Fulcanelli writes of a group of figures in the so-called Treasure Chamber of Jacques Coeur's mansion and their association with the legend of Tristan and Isolde. Far from denying this popular interpretation, Fulcanelli recognises the legend as belonging to the medieval cycle of Courtly Romances which, he realises, were allegorical methods of transmitting ancient knowledge. This, allied to his earlier references to St. James's Spanish school, concurs with his other insights into the transmission of wisdom from the Hebrew and Sufi colleges of Saracen Spain. He even makes references to the '*trouveres*' (Troubadors) of Picardy.

The second part of Fulcanelli's section on Bourges is

devoted to an examination of the Lallemonet Mansion - a subject which he developed in analysing the architecture of other 'hermetic' chateaux in his second large work, *Les Demeures Philosophales*, and relating it to alchemical symbolism.

At Lallemonet, which he obviously visited personally, he draws attention to the size of the kitchen fireplace. Barely large enough to roast a turkey, he observes, yet big enough to take the tower of an athanor - the alchemist's furnace. A sculptured corbel bracket of a man in medieval tunic, robe and hat with its ear-flaps drawn back from his long curls, leans out from his position, grasping what looks like a ladle or pestle. Fulcanelli cannot see him as a 'sixteenth-century broth-spoiler'; he may be a mere *souffleur* or puffer, of course, but is it not much more likely that he is a genuine alchemist? What the man is actually holding, Fulcanelli insists, is not a ladle but a long-necked matrass, as used by chemists of his day and called 'balloons.' In alchemy, it is a standard piece of equipment, used for distillation.

Louis Charpentier, whose work I quoted earlier, identified the figure of an Adept carrying a similar vessel, over the central door of the West entrance to Chartres Cathedral.

There is no space here to analyse further Fulcanelli's allusions to the various keys to the alchemical process signified by the complex symbolism of the Lallemonet Mansion's decorations. The reader must carefully study his words for himself to try to unravel their clues. What he says about the legend of St. Christopher, his allusion to First Matter in connection with a pillar capital and his interpretation of the Lallemonet 'Enigma of the Credence' seem to me to be highly significant.

VI

The Elixir, Soma & The Mystery of Manna

The Superman is living amongst us now! He is here! Isn't that enough for you? I have seen the New Man. He is intrepid and cruel. I was afraid of him.

- Adolf Hitler, in *Hitler Speaks*, by Hermann Rauschning, quoted by Trevor Ravenscroft in *The Spear of Destiny*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1972.)

A QUESTION rarely touched upon by writers on alchemy is: What is the actual effect of the Elixir? What happens to a man who is permitted to use it?

Among the few writers who have tentatively broached this subject, Jacques Sadoul, in *Alchemists & Gold*, says that the aim of the successful adepts, having proved the Stone by its ability to transmute metals, 'was to transmute themselves by swallowing a homoeopathic dose of the Stone twice a year.'

He adds: 'There are very few treatises that explain the stages of the physical and intellectual transformation of an Adept, and the few that do exist remain as manuscripts in the dark maws of great libraries.'

However, Sadoul goes on to quote the archivist Bernard Husson, a painstaking researcher who has spent more than twenty years studying unpublished mss and texts on alchemy. He told Sadoul of his findings, which allowed him to publish the following summary:

'Dosing with the Philosopher's Stone begins with the elimination from the body of all toxins, such as disease germs. Quite suddenly, the Adept loses his hair, his nails

and his teeth, but they grow again later, and are stronger and healthier than before. All natural elimination whatsoever is thereafter effected solely through the sweat glands. Very soon food becomes unnecessary. So the picture of an alchemist eating only just enough to keep himself alive is quite false. In fact, the higher Adept eats only for enjoyment, because he is no longer subject to the natural needs. The influence of the Stone is not confined only to the body; it increases intellectual and spiritual powers tenfold; and is a means of access to true wisdom. Every dissertation stops at this point, for an ordinary person could no longer follow the elect into their new universe.'

Sadoul goes on to give some confirmation of this supposed effect of the Elixir. His informant, Husson, actually found documentation of such a case in the family papers of the Saint-Clair Turgot line. It was written up by the personal physician of a sixteenth-century member of the family, a Councillor of State. As Sadoul observes, the account was obviously not intended for publication and there are no further references to alchemy in any of the other private papers in the family archives.

The story may be summarised as follows:

The Councillor in question was having an affair with a woman, who had been visiting him at home every afternoon for ten years. To avoid unnecessary gossip, she was always accompanied by her faithful, ageing equerry, named Maitre Arnaud. While his mistress was with her clandestine lover, Arnaud would while away the time in a local chemist's shop. The chemist had been researching alchemy for more than twenty years and, one day when Arnaud entered his shop, the man excitedly told him he had finally obtained the Stone and the Elixir. He had, he said, already turned a dozen tin spoons into gold.

He showed Arnaud a glass phial of colourless liquid and urged him to join him in sampling a dose. 'At our age one can't have enough of this sort of thing!' the apothecary said.

He poured out and swallowed a spoonful of the Elixir - and offered Arnaud the phial and spoon. Arnaud was dubious and allowed himself only a few drops on his tongue. He was then

immediately summoned away because his mistress was leaving her paramour and gave the elixir back to the chemist before going out.

En route back to the lady's home, he broke into a cold sweat which quickly developed into a burning fever. A servant was sent to fetch the apothecary - but he quickly returned to tell the lady that the man had suddenly dropped dead.

Maitre Arnaud recovered quickly from his fever, but his hair, nails and teeth began falling out. Saint-Clair Turgot - the lady's lover - on hearing the story, made a point of questioning Arnaud personally and the old man told him the entire story. Saint-Clair Turgot bought up the apothecary's entire stock in hope of finding the Elixir, but neither he nor Maitre Arnaud could identify the glass phial; there were hundreds of similar containers in the shop, none of them labelled.

The Councillor later related the incident to his own physician who, after Saint-Clair Turgot's death, wrote it down. He noted that Maitre Arnaud had regrown hair, teeth and nails and, although he was one hundred and twenty-three years old at the time of writing, seemed in excellent health.

Of course the story is at least third-hand, even in the physician's account, and is entirely circumstantial. But one wonders why a qualified doctor should take the trouble to record such an incident, not for publication but for private archives, if the entire incident were apocryphal or fictitious.

Not surprisingly, there is no mention of Maitre Arnaud becoming suddenly illuminated with cosmic wisdom as a result of his transformation. The explanation for this is relatively easy to understand. It is only the Adept himself in the process of actually *producing* the Stone and Elixir - not those lucky enough to obtain a supply of the Elixir - who is transformed into a Superior Being on a higher level of perception.

But although evidence of the Maitre Arnaud type is difficult to come by, there are other accounts. One is contained in Indian mystical literature, in several of the Vedas and in the *Sushrita Samita*. It is quoted by Dr. Eric Trimmer in *Rejuvenation*¹:

¹ (Robert Hale, 1967.)

'For sixteen days the old man, hairless and toothless, has lain in a coma. On the seventeenth day a miracle starts to happen. He stirs and cuts new teeth. His hair starts to grow dark and lustrous. New fingernails form. At the end of seven weeks he is old no longer. He has been reborn to perpetual youth.'

If the account were not so similar to that of Maitre Arnaud, who lived at a time when Indian mystical literature was virtually unknown in Europe, it would be tempting to dismiss it as some form of folk-myth. And yet there are numerous stories of Hindu sages and mystics living to remarkable ages - and seasoned travellers, physicians and other scientists have testified to their accuracy. There have even been some claims to longevity in comparatively recent times - through the ingestion in homoeopathic doses of alchemically-prepared tinctures.

At least three people have claimed to have benefited from the 'vegetable gold' or 'oil of gold' prepared by the English alchemist, Archibald Cockren, mentioned earlier in this book.

Both the occultist Edward Garstin and the writer C. R. Cammell visited Cockren's laboratory and were shown the 'alchemical tree' growing in a glass vessel.

In *Sword of Wisdom*, Ithell Colquhoun describes what her cousin Edward Garstin saw as 'layer upon layer of basic matter in the traditional colours of black, grey, white and yellow. At the top these had blossomed into a flower-like form, a pattern arranged like petals around a centre, all of a glowing orange-scarlet ...

'By keeping his basic matter for a long time at a constant gentle heat, Cockren had caused it to grow; it had branches like a tree, as Edward told me.'²

Miss Colquhoun describes how Cockren, a masseur by profession, prepared metallic oils or tinctures which he prescribed in minute doses to his patients: 'to take more than would tinge a litre of water would poison one.' (Obviously what must have happened to Maitre Arnaud's over-eager apothecary friend.)

² *Sword of Wisdom*, Ithell Colquhoun, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1975.)

Miss Colquhoun adds: 'Oil-of-gold was the most effective healing agent, but Mrs. Maiya Trancell-Hayes was cured of a nervous breakdown by taking three drops of oil-of-silver, presumably in as many doses.'

Cockren's original laboratory was at his home in Boundary Road, London, N.W.8., but in the Forties, he moved to the Holborn area. The late Gerard Heym - at one time regarded as one of Europe's leading students of occultism - claimed that Cockren saved his life with one of his preparations, after Heym had been injured while on duty in the wartime Fire Service.

The physiotherapist-chemist was financed in setting up his second laboratory by one of his patients, Mrs. Meyer Sassoon, to whom he gave drinkable gold. Heym described it as the finest laboratory since the eighteenth century, according to Miss Colquhoun.

'As lately as 1965,' Miss Colquhoun writes, 'Gerard told me of a friend, then aged ninety-five, who still took potable gold with great benefit; its effect was to prolong life and youth. He could not, or would not, reveal this patient's identity, but there may be others even today who are in possession of Cockren's remedies; if there are, I only wish they would contact me.'

The same, I might add, goes for myself.

Miss Colquhoun claims that Cockren was killed when a direct hit destroyed his Holborn laboratory, but the writer C. R. Cammell tells a different story.

In *Heart of Scotland*,³ Cammell describes how he met Cockren following a favourable review of the alchemist's book, *Alchemy Rediscovered & Restored*, which he wrote for the journal *Light*, in 1940.

He, too, saw Cockren's 'alchemical tree' and 'I saw many things the existence of which I had read'. These included the 'Philosopher's Wine', white and red, distilled from 'Philosopher's Gold,' and various Elixirs of metals.

He describes the Tree: 'When I first saw it, the Tree had just sprouted from the dark metallic mass which is the alchemists' "Sign of the Crow." It was very small; but during the months that I knew Cockren and visited him, I watched it grow in the Hermetically sealed "glasse", just as described by Paracelsus,

³ (Robert Hale, 1956.)

truly "a wonderful and pleasant shrub." The form of the "leaves" was somewhat like those of a cactus - of pure gold.'

Cammell says that Cockren did not live to attain the Philosopher's Stone, but that he survived the wartime 'hit' on his laboratory:

'Cockren knew that his work was protected. When his laboratory was wrecked by the nearby explosion of a bomb, later in the last war, the glass retorts, containing the elixirs, in all states of transmutation, were unharmed - which seemed to be a miracle, as indeed it was.'

According to Cammell, Cockren moved to Brighton 'where on the threshold of final triumph, he died some years since - about 1950.'

He describes the alchemist as 'tireless and also ageless.' He was profoundly learned, good-looking and with thick dark hair showing little grey.

Cammell says:

'He gave me at different times two phials of an elixir of gold, the dose being a few drops taken in wine. The benefit to me was astonishing. At the most dreadful period of the German air-attack in 1940, when I was constantly engaged in A.R.P. [Air Raid Precautions] work, this elixir so exalted me that, when taking it, I experienced little fatigue or nervous depression, required little sleep or food, and both felt and looked healthful and invigorated. The odour and taste of this elixir were like sweet flowers, the colour was clear gold. The Alkahest, the Universal Dissolvent, is almost colourless, transparent, like water: to the taste it is fiery; much more so than pure alcohol.'

Exoterically, the explanation for prolonged health and vigour like that ascribed to the elixir, is often ascribed to advanced systems of Yoga, dieting and meditation, which might indeed be one method of prolonging the life-span considerably. But, since India also boasts a long alchemical tradition, is it not possible that some other, as yet scientifically unsuspected process is involved?

It may be significant that the modern mystic, magician and philosopher, George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff (1877-1949) alluded to such a process in his teachings. Gurdjieff asserted that, in a

sense, most ordinary human beings were 'asleep' to true realities; they were more like machines, operated by outside factors, and could no more control their lives than an engine could help itself to the fuel necessary to keep it functioning.

He told his one-time pupil, P. D. Ouspensky:

'The "man-machine" with whom everything depends upon external influences, with whom everything happens, who is now one, the next moment another, and the next moment a third, has no future of any kind; he is buried and that is all. *Dust returns to dust*. This applies to him. In order to be able to speak of any kind of future life there must be a certain crystallisation, a certain fusion of man's inner qualities, a certain independence of external influences. If there is anything in a man able to resist external influences, then this very thing itself may also be able to resist the death of the physical body.'⁴

Gurdjieff had travelled widely in the East and had been in contact with several Sufi schools and dervish orders, in Persia, Bokhara and eastern Turkestan. And a close study of his teachings indicates that he borrowed extensively from these systems.

He claimed that immortality was not a quality with which man was born, but that it could be *acquired*. He said that the three most commonly known systems aimed at attaining this quality were:

1) The Way of the Fakir, involving long and painful torture of the body. But this way left the emotional and intellectual faculties undeveloped, along with physical considerations, in developing the *physical* will.

2) The Way of the Monk - the way of faith, fasting, meditation, and the focus of strong religious feeling and self-sacrifice. But in this method, while his feelings may be concentrated in a unity, the physical body and the reasoning faculties are neglected.

3) The Way of the Yogi: the way of knowledge, of mind. But even the Yogi leaves his body and emotions improperly developed.

⁴ P. D. Ouspensky: *In Search of the Miraculous*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.)

Gurdjieff, therefore, postulated a Fourth Way, which he also called the Way of the Sly Man. It consisted of working simultaneously on the body, mind and emotions. It did not require the withdrawal from society of the other three systems. On the Fourth Way, the aspirant should do nothing that he did not understand - except on an experimental basis under the guidance of a teacher.

Gurdjieff said:

'A man who follows the fourth way knows quite definitely what substances he needs for his aims and that these substances can be produced within the body by a month of physical suffering, by a week of emotional strain, or by a day of mental exercises - and also, that they can be introduced into the organism from without if it is known how to do it. And so, instead of spending a whole day in exercises like the yogi, a week in prayer like the monk, or a month in self-torture like the fakir, he simply prepares and swallows a little pill which contains all the substances he wants and, in this way, without loss of time, he obtains the required results.'⁵

This entire proposal not only sounds remarkably similar to the Way of the Sufi, but also appears to embrace the entire underlying theory of alchemy. It also helps to give some idea of the metaphysical process that the Adept undergoes during his long and practical laboratory work. Gurdjieff is quite clear about this: *something* must be developed *within the human body*, which will enable the seeker to place himself outside the influence of mundane, physical factors.

That *something* represents the absolute goal of the alchemist. It is the *Summum Bonum*, the 'Gift of God', the 'arcane substance.'

We have seen that, whatever it may be to start with, the Stone is not something which can be identified and analysed by any orthodox methods. In addition to having physical properties, it also has some super-physical, spiritual quality which is both projected into it by the alchemist himself and, in turn, reflected in the make-up of the transfigured Adept.

⁵ Ibid.

According to the Hindu literature on the subject of alchemy, the 'secret' ingredient which is employed in the Elixir is the mysterious soma plant. But the Hindu writers are not terribly specific about what this plant looks like and how it ought to be prepared, although they say it is to be found all over India. Botanists have identified it – but only to their own scientific satisfaction – as *Asclepias acida*, a member of a family of perennial, tropical shrubs.

Here is what Madame Blavatsky had to say about soma in her monumental work, *Isis Unveiled*:⁶

'This Hindu sacred beverage answers to the Greek ambrosia or nectar, drunk by the gods of Olympus. A cup of kykeon was also quaffed by the mysta at the Eleusinian initiation. He who drinks it easily reaches *Bradhma*, or place of splendour, (Heaven). The soma drink known to Europeans is not the genuine beverage, but its substitute; for the initiated priests alone can taste of the real soma; and even kings and rajas, when sacrificing, receive the substitute. Haug shows by his own confession in his *Aytareya Brahmanan* [M. Haug, Bombay, 1863] that it was not the soma that he tasted and found nasty, but the juice from the roots of the Nyagradha, a plant or bush which grows on the hills of Poona. We were positively informed that the majority of the sacrificial priests of the Dekkan have lost the secret of true soma. It can be found neither in the ritual books nor through oral information. The true followers of the primitive Vedic religion are very few; [H.P.B. was writing in 1877 – author's note] these are the alleged descendants from the Rishis, the real Agnihotris, the initiates of the great Mysteries. The soma-drink is also commemorated in the Hindu Pantheon, for it is called the King-Soma. He who drinks of it is made to participate in the heavenly king, because he becomes filled with it, as the Christian apostles became filled with the Holy Ghost, and purified of their sins. The soma makes a new man of the initiate; he is reborn and transformed, and his spiritual nature overcomes the physical; it gives the divine power of inspiration, and develops the clairvoyant faculty to the utmost. According to

the exoteric explanation, the soma is a plant, but; at the same time it is an angel. It forcibly connects the inner highest "spirit" of man, which spirit is an angel, like the mystical soma, with his "irrational soul," or astral body, and thus united by the power of the magic drink, they soar together above physical nature, and participate during life in the beatitude and ineffable glories of Heaven.

'Thus the Hindu soma is mystically, and in all respects the same that the Eucharistic supper is to the Christians. The idea is similar. By means of the sacrificial prayers – the mantras – this liquor is supposed to be transformed on the spot into real soma – or the angel, and even into Brahma himself. Some missionaries have expressed themselves very indignantly about this ceremony, the more so that, generally speaking, the Brahmans use a kind of spirituous liquor as a substitute. But do the Christians less fervently believe in the transubstantiation of the communion-wine into the blood of Christ, because this wine happens to be less spirituous? Is not the idea of the symbol attached to it the same?

Once again, we can see in H.P.B.'s somewhat prosaic account, that the mystical soma has affinities with the arcane substance of the alchemists. It is not, on its own, of great value. It is not something which can simply be gathered and used in its natural state. Something has to be projected into it.

In his *Oriental Magic*⁷, Idries Shah Sayed gives an account of a modern woman who actually saw and handled the soma plant. She helped to gather it and extract the juices and aided an Indian alchemist with a complicated and exhausting 12-day process of using the extract to turn a piece of silver into its own weight of gold. When the woman took it to a jeweller in a nearby town, he offered to buy the gold from her immediately.

The woman was Morag Murray Abdullah, a Scotswoman who married an Afghan and who had lived in the East for more than thirty years at the time Idries Shah wrote his account.

The name of the alchemist was Aquil Khan and he lived in a cave. Mme. Murray Abdullah did not specify the location, but described Aquil as 'tall, of that wiry Pathan race so well known in the Khyber, he was thin, bearded, turbaned and the colour

⁶ Vol. I, pp. xl-xli, (Theosophical Publishing Society, 1877.)

⁷ (Octagon Press, 1974.)

of mahogany.' He wore off-white trousers and an old army tunic.

A man of few words, Aquil Khan handed Mme. Murray Abdullah and her guide, Ahmed, an empty pint bottle each, then led them off some four miles into the jungle, where the soma plants were to be found. She describes them as 'like tall dandelions.' The alchemist showed them how to break the stems and collect the 'milky juice' or sap in the bottles. They spent two hours doing this.

After returning to the cave, Ahmed and Madame Murray Abdullah were sent home by the alchemist, but returned at dawn the next day. They were this time taken a three-hour walk to a jungle clearing, where Aquil Khan collected creamy-yellow mud from the bed of an icy stream. About four pounds of the mud was carried back to the cave in a knotted cloth.

There, the alchemist made two deep bowls from the clay about six inches in diameter. They were placed out to dry in the sun and the audience of two was once again dismissed.

The following day was spent collecting a hard, dark-brown wood from different types of trees. A quarry was the venue for the fourth day, where grey, squarish rocks, the size of cricket balls were gathered. Day five and a fire within a semi-circular earthen wall was built. First 'paper with squares written on it' was placed down, then the dark wood, then charcoal and the dried blood of a white goat. The powdered blood was mixed with nutmeg, cinnamon and incense.

The alchemist told them that the fire had to be kept burning continuously for four days. If it were allowed to go out, the entire process would have to be started again. The fire had not to be lit until the first New Moon.

Meanwhile, the horoscopes of the two 'assistants' were cast by Aquil Khan, to ensure that there were no unfavourable conjunctions of the planets. The two bowls were placed on the ground on a piece of linen, two yards square. Fifty yards of cotton was cut into one-inch strips and laid on the linen. The remainder of the clay was mixed with spring water until it was the consistency of cream. A piece of stone 'the size of a large apricot' was placed in one of the bowls, along with a piece of silver about the size of a sugar-lump. Two tablespoonfuls of the soma sap was poured over these.

Aquil Khan covered the first bowl with the second, then sealed the two together by dipping strips of cotton in clay and winding them tightly around the seal. More clay was daubed over the entire 'crucible' and it was then placed in the fire. Hot charcoals were spread over it.

The crucible had to be maintained at white heat for seven days and nights, and the two assistants took turns in keeping vigil. Aquil Khan frequently cast a wary eye at the heavens, 'like a man who keeps looking at his watch.' He warned them that there was to be 'no talk, no laughing, no optimism, no doubt. No eating or drinking on duty!'

After the required period, the red ball was taken by Aquil from the fire and left to cool in a pile of sand. This took twelve hours.

Eventually, the bowls were prised open and inside was 'a piece of yellow metal.' Aquil handed it to Madame Murray Abdullah and said: 'take it to a jeweller and see if it is gold.'

When she appeared hesitant, the alchemist walked into the rear of his cave, took out a large cotton bag and began to empty its contents on the ground. About fifty other nuggets 'just like the one which lay in my hand' fell out, Madame Murray Abdullah said.

'These are some, there are many more,' the alchemist told her.

He said that when he began, he had had his doubts. It had taken him thirty years to learn the art.

'Thirty years ... of water and nuts, berries and starvation, contemplation and experiment.'

He had to learn astrology, how to tame animals, how to read the signs of nature. He began with a garbled, imperfect formula which he had to correct by trial and error. It took him years to locate the places where the required ingredients were.

When Madame Murray Abdullah asked him what were his plans for the future, Aquil Khan shrugged. He had perfected the system five years ago and had been making gold ever since, he said.

'I cannot do anything else. And I do not want to. But what is the use of it all? I set at naught all my old Master warned me against. It becomes an obsession ...

'What is the good of gold? Can it restore life? I am its slave. I cannot get away from it. I cannot, will not, give the gold away, sell it or let anyone else have it. I do not know why this is, either.'

In relaying the tale, Idries Shah Sayed points out that Madame Murray Abdullah gained nothing from the gold or the story, which she gave to him free.

This somewhat wistful account of Aquil Khan seems to bring home what Gurdjieff taught. Clearly, Aquil Khan had followed one of the paths which allows development in one direction only - to the neglect of all other human aspirations. In a way, he was like the fakir, who might achieve some sense of inner enlightenment by months of self-torture - but at the expense of his other faculties. Or the monk whose blind and single-minded faith does not develop his reason or his physical faculties.

Aquil Khan had acquired the art of making gold, but he could not produce the Elixir ...

He was finely attuned with the currents of Nature and of the Cosmos, yet he could not achieve supreme enlightenment ...

Obviously, he was not a true, fulfilled alchemist, could not become the Perfected Man of the Sufi Way, or of Gurdjieff's Fourth Way.

* * *

On April 1, 1976, the English magazine *New Scientist* carried an article by George Sassoon and Rodney Dale which created a minor stir in newspapers and on radio. It was headed: *Deus est machina?* It purported, through a reinterpretation of certain passages in the Hebrew Qabalah, to show that the 'ancient of Days' of Biblical texts was none other than a 'special fermentation unit' which the ancient Israelites constructed to produce 'manna from heaven' - 'a single-cell protein.'

Most of the news media, noting the date on which the article appeared, were inclined to regard it warily as a typical and cunningly conceived April Fools' Day joke, aimed at debunking theorists of the Was-God-An-Astronaut variety. But, as Erich von Däniken himself pointed out in his book, *According*

to the Evidence,⁸ the two authors of the article had already previously published their theories in *Interface*, a house journal of Cambridge Consultants, and subsequently in the June, 1976 issue of *Ancient Skies*, a Chicago-based journal. They had also lectured on the subject and were preparing a book, *The Manna Machine* (1977) which they followed up with *The Qabalah Decoded* (1978).

Sassoon is an electronics consultant and linguist, while Dale is a biologist and freelance engineering writer. Originally, Sassoon had begun his researches with a copy of S. L. MacGregor Mathers' translation of the Qabalah, *The Kabbalah Unveiled* (Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1926.) But he found it too unclear and complex and began to learn Aramaic so that he might consult the earliest extant texts.

It was then that he believed he saw references in the work to the construction of an apparatus for the manufacture of manna, the white substance which the Bible says sustained the Israelites during their sojourn in the desert.

Sassoon got together with Dale, who also saw possible allegorical references to some sort of biochemical laboratory in the language of the Qabalah and soon, with the aid of a draughtsman named Martin Riches, they devised what they considered was an acceptable prototype of the manna-making 'Ancient of Days.'

The text from which they derived their ideas represents a revised translation of Verses 51 to 73 of the *Hadra Zvta Qdisha* (The Lesser Holy Assembly):

The upper skull is white. In it is neither beginning nor end. The hollow thing of its juices is extensive and intended for flowing ... From this hollow thing for the juice of the white skull the dew falls every day into the Small-faced One ... And his head is filled and he falls from the Small-faced One on to a field of apples. And the whole field of apples flows with that dew. The Ancient Holy One is mysterious and hidden. And the higher wisdom is hidden in the skull which was found, and from this to that the Ancient is not opened. And the head is not for itself, as it is the uppermost part of the whole head. The upper wisdom is in the head: it is hidden and is called the

⁸ (Souvenir Press, 1977; Corgi Books, 1978).

upper brain, the hidden brain, the brain that moderates and is calm. And there is no son who knows it. Three heads are hollowed out: this into that and this above the other. One head is wisdom; it is hidden from the one that is covered. This wisdom is hidden, it is the uppermost of all the heads of the other wisdoms. The upper head is the 'Ancient and Holy One,' the most hidden of all the hidden. He is the upper part of the whole head, of the head which is not a head and is unknown. And consequently, the 'Ancient Holy One' is called NOTHING. And all those hairs and all those cords from the brain are hidden and in containers. And the throat cannot quite be seen ... There is a path which flows in the division of the hairs from the brain ... And from this path flow all the remaining paths, which hang down in the Small-faced One.

Although this version differs markedly in style from the translation of MacGregor Mathers, there is nothing in it which wildly conflicts - given the mystical and often impenetrable nature of the passages themselves. Orthodox Qabalists interpret all these references to heads and paths and flowings as symbolic of the emanations of the Unknowable (Ayn Soph) down into the Invisible and Visible Worlds represented by the Paths and Sephiroths, or Spheres, of the Tree of Life.

But Sassoon and Dale decided that there was a quite physical interpretation of the words, which led them to the design of their supposed manna-machine.

Roughly interpreted, the 'Ancient of Days' is said to have two 'skulls' - the Macroprosopus and the Microprosopus - one above the other. Both of these were in turn encircled by another 'skull.' This contained the 'upper brain' in which the heavenly dew was distilled. The lower brain contained the 'heavenly oil.' The Microprosopus, or lower skull, had four eyes, one of which shone from inside outwards, while three others were not self-illuminating. These appear to have been, from left to right, black, red and yellow.

Verse 532 of Chapter XIV of the Qabalah says: 'So therefore no man can convert all the inferior colours - the black, red and yellow - into the white brilliance.'

And Verse 533: 'For only with this glance (of Macroprosopus) are they all united and transformed into the white brilliance.'

The beard of the Ancient was said to have thirteen different

forms and the hairs grew out of the face and back into it again. These hairs were soft and holy oil ran through them.

The Microprosopus, or Small-Faced One, had a hard skull in which 'fire' developed in one half and 'air' in the other. Fine air was whirled from the one and fine fire from the other, while oil flowed from the upper to the lower skull and changed colour from *white to red*. Around the hard skull lay the lower brain which distilled the dew with which it became filled daily over its outer form. What trickled from it, according to Sassoon and Dale, was manna. It was collected below in 'Hosts'.

According to Sassoon and Dale, the 'Ancient' fell into a trance every Sabbath, when his parts could be cleaned and reassembled.

The English researchers determined that the upper part was a distilling apparatus with an upper surface over which air was conducted and condensed. The liquid was led into a container in the middle of which a strong light source created a culture, possibly a green algae of the chlorella type. The balances of protein, carbohydrates and fat could be varied by providing suitable conditions for growth.

The algae cultures were circulated in a system of pipes which provided an exchange of oxygen and carbon dioxide and discharged excess heat. The chlorella slime was tapped into another vessel where it was treated so that its starch hydrolysed into maltose, which when lightly toasted, took on a slight flavour of honey. (*Exodus* 16, 31, says that manna was 'like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey.')

Sassoon and Dale speculate that the dried product was divided into two equal portions, one for the immediate day's supply, the other providing sufficient for the Sabbath, the day of rest, on which the machine was not functional. It was during this time that the manna-machine could be cleaned and serviced, ready to resume production the next day.

According to the researchers' calculations, the machine had to supply one *omer* (about three litres) of manna a day for each person. As the Israelites numbered 600 families, it needed a daily output of 1.5 cubic metres.

The ultimate fate of the manna-machine, after the Israelites left the wilderness, is unknown. But Joshua 5, 12, says, 'the

manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more.' It has been suggested that perhaps, along with the Ark of the Covenant, it was kept at Shiloh after the capture of Jericho. (1 *Samuel* 4,3.) Later, it might have been placed, again along with the Ark, in David's tent at Jerusalem (1 *Chronicles* 15, 1) and later transferred into the Temple built by Solomon (2 *Chronicles* 2, 5). Along with the Temple, Ark and other holy objects, it would naturally have been lost during subsequent sackings and destruction of the original Temple.

Now despite all the surmises of Sassoon and Dale, the so-called manna-machine - if indeed such it was - sounds more to me like some alchemical process or apparatus, than a system for producing food. Note the sequence of colours mentioned: black, red, yellow, white. These are very close to the alchemical colour progression.

MacGregor Mathers' translation of the Lesser Holy Assembly contains verses which say:

53. And from this convexity of the joining together of this White Skull daily distilleth a dew into Microprosopus, into that place which is called Heaven; and in that very place shall the dead be raised to life in the time to come.

54. Like as it is written, Gen. xxvii, 27: 'And Elohim shall give thee the dew of Heaven.'

60. One Head is the Concealed Wisdom, which is covered and is not disclosed.

61. And this Hidden Wisdom is the Head of all things, and the Head of the remaining wisdoms.

The Qabalah, as we have inferred, formed part of the corpus of esoteric teachings of the Spanish schools of wisdom and was familiar to many of the hermetic theorists and practising alchemists. It is said to have been handed down orally from time immemorial, but not written down until, at the very earliest, the second century, by Simon bar Jochai. Even this is in dispute and many commentators have said that the parts with which we are here concerned were not committed to writing until the thirteenth century, by the Spanish Rabbi Moses Ben Shem Tov, of Leon. Certainly, MacGregor Mathers' translation derived from Knorr von Rosenroth's Latin *Kabbalah Denudata* of 1677, which in its turn had its

origin in the earliest extant Aramaic version, the *Cremona Codex* of 1558.

Knowing what we do of the link between Qabalistic and Hermetic teachings, then, surely it would be more likely that the hidden secrets of the Qabalah contained encoded alchemical information, rather than of some curious device used thousands of years previously for distilling manna? A mystery of the latter type would seem hardly worth preserving - especially since it had been unused for centuries. Besides, where would the Israelites, during their sojourn in the wilderness, have found the materials and technology for the construction of such a proposed machine?

Although the Qabalah has by no means yielded up its entire secrets and, like Lully's precursory cybernetics or Trithemius' *Steganographia*, can be applied to a wide area of arcane knowledge, I feel certain that parts of its abstruse doctrines may well eventually be found to contain alchemical data, rather than the short-term proposals put forward by Sassoon and Dale.

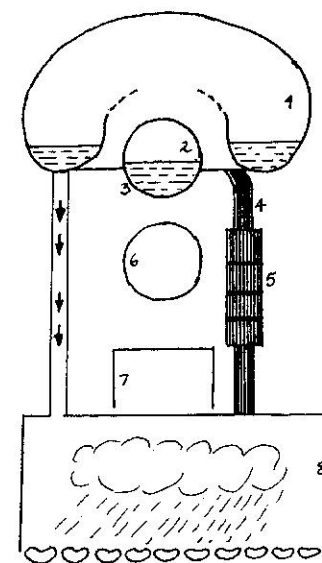


Fig. 14. The so-called 'manna machine' of Sassoon and Dale (after a drawing by Dale).

Compare Dale's design of the 'manna-machine' (See Fig. 14) with practically any of the early distillation systems of the alchemical texts, and the similarity is more than obvious.

VII

The Ultimate Mystery

The goal towards which the human race should strive is a progressive reintegration of the sexes which should end in androgyny.

- Friedrich von Schlegel, (1772-1829).

EUGENE CANSELIET, the man closest to Fulcanelli throughout the entire enactment of this intriguing mystery, claims that he met his Master in Spain - as recently as 1954. This was, it will be noted, twenty-two years after the death of the artist Jean-Julien Champagne, and ten years since the 'last' disappearance of Fulcanelli himself, after the Liberation of Paris in 1944.

If, as Canseliet has maintained, Fulcanelli was eighty when last they worked together in the Twenties, it would make the Master somewhere in the region of 100 to 110 years old by the time of the Spanish encounter.

There is little doubt that Canseliet went to Spain that year. The late Gerard Heym, who has been described as the Number One occult scholar of his day, became acquainted with Canseliet through a friendship with his daughter - and actually contrived to inspect Canseliet's passport. It was stamped with a Spanish entry-visa for 1954.

How Canseliet got the call to go to Spain is less certain, but Heym gained the impression that the message was relayed to him in some paranormal manner, possibly through clairvoyance.

Sources close to Canseliet have related to me what the elderly alchemist says occurred on this occasion. It may be summarised as follows:

Having received the mysterious summons, Canseliet packed his bags and travelled overland to Spain. His destination was Seville, where he was told that he would be met.

This rendezvous was kept, by whom is not certain, and Canseliet was then taken by a long and circuitous route to a large chateau or castle, somewhere in the mountains. On arrival, he was greeted by his old Master, Fulcanelli, who still had the appearance of a man around fifty years of age. Canseliet would then have been fifty-four himself.

Canseliet was shown to his quarters in an upper storey of one of the castle's turrets, his window overlooking the broad, rectangular courtyard below. During his stay, Canseliet gained the eventual impression that the castle was a secret refuge for a whole colony of advanced alchemists - possibly even Adepts like his Master - and owned by Fulcanelli himself. Shortly after his arrival, he was shown a 'petit laboratoire' in which he was told he would be allowed to work and experiment. He remarked later to a close friend that, so impressed was he by this 'little laboratory', he wondered what the 'grand laboratoire' - presuming by inference that there was one - might be like in comparison.

On returning to his quarters, Canseliet went over to lean on the window-sill for a breath of air and his eyes wandered to the courtyard below. Down there, he saw a group of children, presumably those of other guests at the castle, playing. But there was something unusual about them. On closer inspection, he realised that it was the clothes they were wearing. They appeared for all the world like costumes of around the 16th century. The children were engrossed in some kind of game and Canseliet decided that perhaps they were dressed up in readiness for some masque or fancy-dress party. That night he went to bed, thinking no more about the incident.

The next day, he was once more engrossed in experiments in the laboratory which had been allotted him. Occasionally, his Master appeared, to speak briefly to him and check on his progress.

Then, one morning bright and early, Canseliet, without bothering to wash or shave, went down the staircase of the turret in which he was quartered, to stand in an archway that opened onto the courtyard. He was standing there, his shirt

front unfastened, in his braces, taking in the sharp morning air, when he heard voices.

Across the courtyard came a group of three women, apparently chattering. Canseliet was surprised to see that they wore long, flowing dresses of the 16th-century style – similar to the garb in which he had seen the children a day or so earlier. Another masque, perhaps? The women were drawing closer.

Canseliet was torn between surprise at what he saw and embarrassment at being caught standing there in a state of partial 'déshabillé'. He was about to turn on his heel and return to his rooms when, as the women walked by the place where he stood, one of them turned, looked at him and smiled.

It was only for a brief instant. The woman then turned back to her companions and they continued on their way, out of his line of vision.

Canseliet was staggered. The face of the 'woman' who had turned to glance at him, he swears, *was that of Fulcanelli*.

Bizarre as the story may sound, it is what Canseliet says he saw and, perhaps understandably, he has previously confided it only to certain close friends.

What are we to make of this strange episode?

The Fulcanelli had somehow become transformed into a woman?

That he was a secret transvestite?

That he was playing some inexplicable and perverse joke on his devoted pupil?

Or, perhaps even more mundanely, that Fulcanelli had a daughter or a sister who closely resembled him?

One can only speculate. But such speculation can at least be tempered with some awareness of the more obscure alchemical arcana. And a possible explanation is perhaps not so unbelievable as it at first might appear.

One of the prominent and more mysterious among the many symbols of the Great Work is that known as the alchemical Androgyne, or Hermaphrodite. In the classic texts of alchemy, this is often alluded to as being symbolic of the dual-nature of the Secret Fire, of the various compound salts employed, of the *Rebis*, or double-thing.

But it is occasionally indicated as the symbol of the completed work itself.

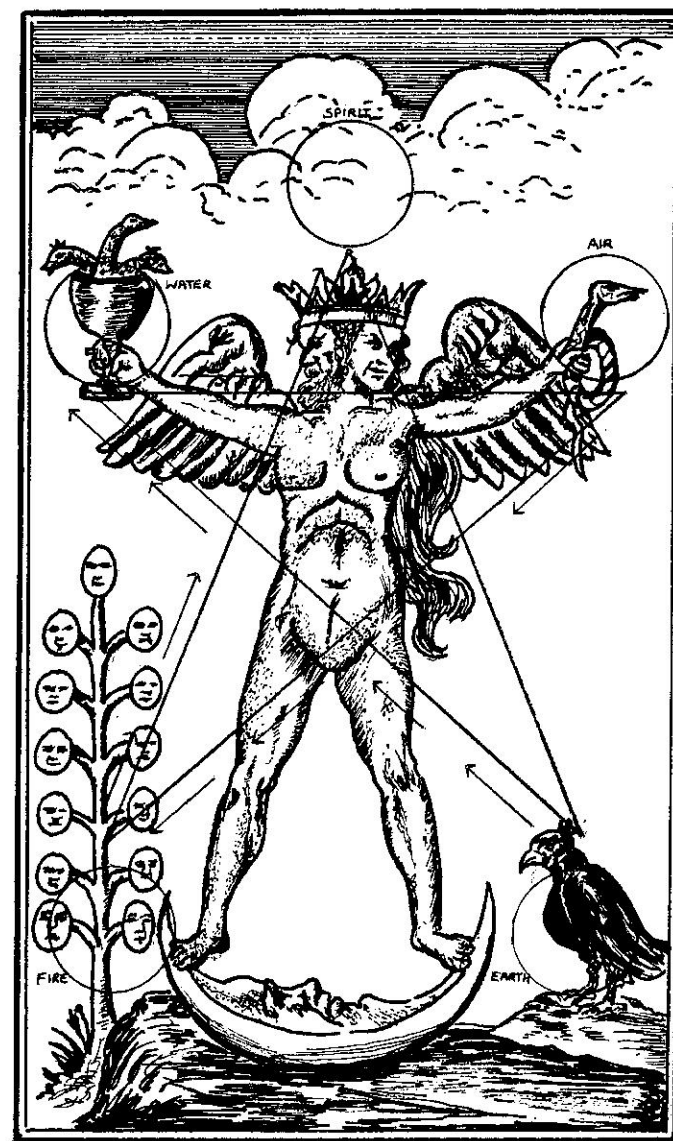


Fig. 15. The Elemental Pentagram projected upon the Divine Androgyne – the Completed Work, and the Perfected Being (from an engraving in the *Rosarium Philosophorum*, 18th Century).

There are many different pictorial versions of this androgynous figure in alchemical literature, but they all bear similar intrinsic and allegorical characteristics. An interpretive description of a typical example should suffice to give an idea of their inner meaning and, ultimately, a hint of their true decipherment. (See Fig. 15)

The Androgyne, or Hermaphrodite, is depicted as a naked figure of a human being with two heads, one male, one female, side by side. Sometimes, as in our example here, the faces of the two sexes are imposed upon a single head and facing in opposite directions, like the familiar forward-and-backward looking busts of the ancient Roman god, Janus. The head or heads are crowned with a Triple Crown. The male aspect of the figure is generally on the left of the illustration, (although this varies), bearded and gazing towards the left. The female looks in the opposite direction and, apart from her facial features, can usually easily be identified by her longer hair. The figure is normally winged, which is said to indicate the spiritual aspect of the alchemical attainment. Although details of genitalia are rarely depicted, the left-hand side of the body is usually quite obviously masculine, i.e., flat-chested, while the right side has a notably female breast. The figure has its arms outstretched. The left, male hand grasps a chalice in which there are three writhing serpents – the three Principles of Soul, Spirit and Body, externalized as Mercury, Sulphur and Salt. In the right, female hand is the Ouroboros-serpent, symbol of infinity and of the soul turning inward upon itself and providing its own nourishment.

The head of the Androgyne is in the sky or clouds, indicating the high Spiritual Illumination attained, rulership of the conscious, Sun element, while the feet are balanced on each of the 'horns' of a horizontal crescent moon. This denotes mastery of the unconscious, or Lunar nature of the psyche. Thus, poised between heaven and earth, Sun and Moon, and between the sexual polarities which they represent, the Perfected Being has achieved an ideal balance or equilibrium of the opposite natures, the conscious and the unconscious, the male and female, active and passive.

Beside the female right foot of the figure is the black crow, or raven. It symbolises both the blackening, dissolution and

putrefaction of the *nigredo* stage of the physical work, and the darkening process of inner self-absorption, the withdrawal from the mundane; the so-called 'dark night of the soul' of Christian mysticism.

By the male foot grows the 'alchemical tree,' bearing thirteen silver leaves, symbolising the thirteen lunar months and the transition of the One (the alchemist) within the Twelve (the unconscious archetypes.) This is a system mirrored in the initiation procedures of many mystical fraternities which we have considered in earlier chapters, whose inner sanctum is often formed by an elite order of twelve, with their supreme head making thirteen.

If a pentagram is projected onto this profound alchemical glyph (See Fig. 15) one can see essential symbols of the Elemental principles of the Great Work in their correct order of application and manifestation. Beginning in the lower right-hand corner, these are Earth (the Black Crow, or Raven); Water (the Chalice, in which the three Principles are dissolved); Air (the soul-quality of the Ouroboros), and Fire (the growth-principle of the alchemical tree). The pentagram is completed at the point of the Androgyne's crown – representing the Fifth Principle of Ether, Universal Spirit or Quintessence.

That, at least, is one interpretation of this strange figure and its accompanying set of symbols.

But, as inferred earlier, this Androgyne is also meant to signify the End of the Work – the Perfected Being. The successful Adept who has transcended mundane existence, the fulfilled and completed One who has attained the essence of Deity and become 'more than human.'

So far as most exoteric interpretations of alchemy are concerned, I have never read that this Androgyne is anything other than an allegory, a symbolic figure. But there are esoteric indications that it might have a slightly more literal application – which might correspond to the 'transfigured' Fulcanelli whom Canseliet saw in Spain.

Stated straightforwardly in this way, the idea may sound absurd. But there are profound occult reasons for believing that it may have some basis in actual, physical reality.

In order to try to appreciate these complex, esoteric

considerations, we shall now have to look at an alternative system of Self-Enlightenment. Although I suggested in an earlier chapter that I did not think that the practices of Tantricism and the advanced Yoga techniques of *Kundalini-Sakti* were identical with those of the alchemical art, I have good reason to believe that the more arcane of the alchemical processes may have some affinities with these Eastern disciplines. It will be recalled that, at a crucial stage of the Great Work, there is ample suggestion that the alchemist must project *something else*, something of his inner nature, into the materials with which he is working. This is often described as the intervention of God, suggesting a higher, divine hand in complete attainment of the Work. It could equally be interpreted as having parallels in the practices of Tantra and Kundalini Yoga. Some detailed explanation of these areas is therefore necessary.

According to the tenets of *Kundalini-Yoga*, a type of energy rests in the human body, somewhere in the region of the spinal column, between the genitals and anus. This area is known as the *Muladhara chakra* or 'centre' and the energy that is envisaged there is allegorised as a serpent coiled in slumber. The purpose of *Kundalini-Yoga* is, via various highly advanced and difficult postures, breathing techniques and mental processes, to awaken this serpent, or energy, and to cause it to rise dynamically through other subtle bodily centres or *chakras* in a precise order. This must also be achieved with precise control.

The centres or *chakras* are not seen as physical entities, but 'subtle' zones which correspond roughly to the physical body's endocrine glands. The main ones are shown in my diagram. (See Fig 16). If the candidate is successful – and the work can take years to perfect, even with the necessary aid of an experienced Guru – the *Kundalini-Sakti*, or Serpent Power is said to find its ultimate goal in the highest *chakra*, or centre. The result is Supreme Illumination, annihilation of the ordinary, everyday, conscious self and oneness or *yoga* (Union) with the ultimate.

Tantrik texts and their commentators warn that the raising of *Kundalini* is a very dangerous practice for the uninitiated and can, if not properly controlled, lead to obsession, insanity

and even death. (For examples of the involuntary or accidental raising of the energy, see Gopi Krishna: *Kundalini*, 1971, or Arthur Avalon: *The Serpent Power*, 1918.)

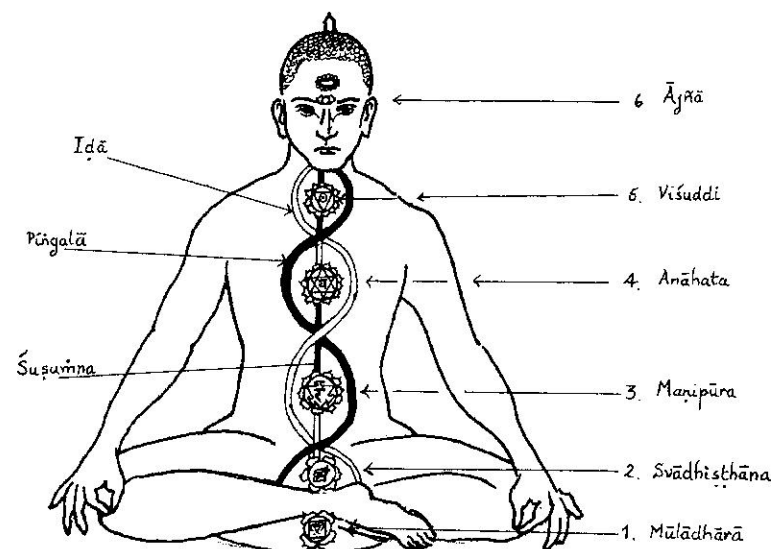


Fig. 16. Diagrammatic representation of the Nādis (conduits) of Prona (Life-force) and the major chakras (centres) or padma (Lotuses) of Kundalini-Yoga.

The successful raising of *Kundalini* is also said to purify the *Bhuta-Suddhi*, or 'elements' of the body – a process which parallels the supposed effects of the various elixirs obtainable through the alchemical process.

The energy raised is called the 'Serpent Power' because *Kundalini* derives from *Kundala*, meaning 'coiled' and is allegorized as a *Devi* or goddess in the form of a snake, coiled in the lowest bodily centre, at the base of the spinal column.

According to one of the most famous Western expositions of the *Kundalini* technique, the above-mentioned book *The Serpent Power* by Arthur Avalon, similar systems of self-

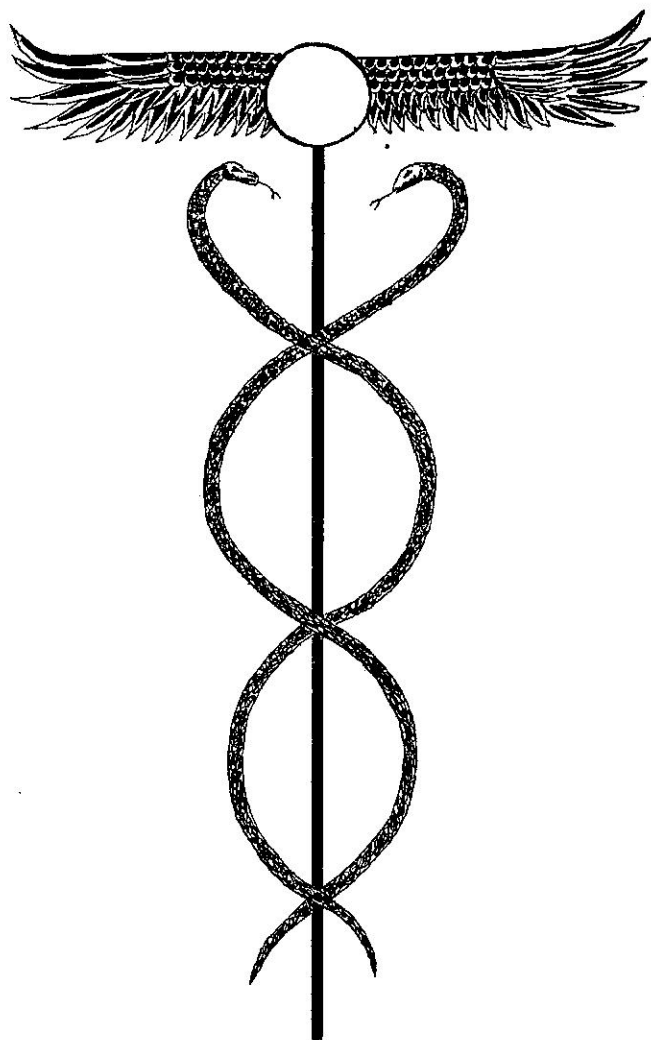


Fig. 17. The Caduceus of Mercury has been equated with the Nādis (conduits) of Kundalini-Sakti (Serpent Power).

illumination are found in various non-Hindu cultures in many parts of the world. We have already noted that the Sufis, along with Gurdjieff, talk of creating 'special substances' within the human body, designed to prolong the lifespan, elevate spiritual awareness and accelerate the desired further evolution of the human species. Avalon, which was the pen-name of Sir John Woodroffe, says that there are areas in the Hindu philosophy of *Kundalini-Yoga* analogous to those of the ancient Maya civilisation of South America, and which can be found in their sacred book, *The Popul Vuh*.

The *Kundalini* energy is said by its Hindu exponents to rise via three channels (See Fig. 17), known as *Nadis*, or conduits. These are called *Susumna*, the central channel, *Ida* and *Pingala*. Avalon says that in the Maya scripture they correspond to the 'air-tube' and 'two-fold air tube.' The Serpent Power itself corresponds to the Maya concept of *Hurakan* (lightning), while the Maya depict the *chakras* by animal glyphs.

The three *Nadis* have often been likened by commentators to the serpent-entwined rod or caduceus of Hermes, or Mercury, the messenger-god. (See Fig. 17)

As the *Kundalini* exponent raises the Serpent Power, bringing it up through the centres, he is said to obtain occult powers (*siddhis*.) But to concentrate only upon the acquisition of such powers is regarded as idle and an obstruction to proper attainment. The lesser *fakirs* or common street-magicians of India are sometimes yogis who have forsaken the ultimate path to occupy themselves with these powers.

When man's consciousness is 'awake' to the ordinary, everyday world, *Kundalini* is said to be sleeping - and the world that man perceives is but the dream-creation of the sleeping serpent goddess. When she is awakened and the union (yoga) is established with the highest centre, the *Ajna-chakra*, between the eyebrows at the position of the pineal gland or the mysterious 'Third Eye' of Oriental mysticism, man sleeps to the mundane world. But at the same time he is held to enjoy supra-mundane consciousness, in the same way that the successful alchemist is believed to be Illuminated on attainment of the Stone. This is also in some way comparable to Gurdjieff's concept of the 'sleeping' and 'awakened' man and to the Sufi ideal of the Perfected One.

Possibly a less complex and allegorical explanation for this phenomenon is that, in reality, *Kundalini* is cosmic energy within the human body and to bring it into play is to conjoin the soul and spirit with the essence of the entire creation.

Avalon says: 'The end of *Kundalini-Yoga* is beyond all Heaven worlds. No Yogi seeks "Heaven" but union with that which is the source of all worlds.'

A thorough grounding in Hindu philosophy, religious doctrine and esoteric ritual is necessary to understand fully the foundations of *Kundalini-Yoga*, which are both scientific and deeply metaphysical. Even given these prerequisites, it is said that only one in a thousand who attempts the practice might stand a chance of success – and that only with the help of an initiated Guru.

One interesting aspect of the philosophy, which is paralleled in other eastern systems, is that Mind and Matter are not seen strictly as possessions or attributes through which man can view the universe and the world of spirit, but as *manifestations* of pure, ultimate, cosmic consciousness. They are rather the vehicles through which Spirit, manifested in Self, can operate. Without this Spirit, according to Hindu philosophy, mind and matter are unconscious.

Man is seen as pure consciousness driven by power (*Sakti*), in the form of Mind and Body.

Avalon says: 'Theologically speaking, Pure Consciousness is *Siva*, the great *Devi*, the Mother of the Universe. She resides in man's body in its lowest centre at the base of the spine as the Life-Force.'

But *Siva* can only properly be realized in the highest of the brain centres – the cerebrum, or *Shasrara-Padma* – through union with her Masculine equivalent. The completion of this form of specialised Yoga is seen as dissolution (*Laya*), which is the reverse of the involution of Spirit in Mind and Matter.

Like the Qabalists and alchemists, the practitioners of this Yoga see man as a microcosm (*Ksudra-Brahmanda* – little egg of Brahma) of the macrocosm, (*Brahmanda*.) They aver, therefore, that there is nothing in the universe which is not in the human body. That all mind or matter existing in the universe also exists in one form or another in the body. There is, therefore no need to seek the concept of God in the cosmos, because he is *within*.

The Hindus call him the Ruler Within (*Antaryamin*), or the Inner Self (*Antaratma*.)

Thus, the alchemical aphorism of Hermes Trismegistos – 'what is above is like what is below, and what is below is like what is above' – is echoed in the *Visvasra-Tantra*:

'What is here is there. What is not here is nowhere.'

Just as there is Supreme Power (*Siva-Sakti*) in the universe, there is similar power within the body.

'Thus the body is a vast magazine of power,' says Avalon. 'The object of Tantrik rituals is to raise these forms of Power to their full expression. The Tantras say that *it is within the power of man to accomplish all he wishes if he centres his will thereon.*' (My italics.)

Because man in essence is one with the Supreme Lord and Mother, the more that he manages to manifest the Spirit, the greater the power he will attain.

Consciousness is unlimited, say the Tantriks. It only appears limited because it is restricted within the confines of mind and body, in the way that the light of a lantern can be restricted by its bowl or shade.

The gross body of matter is called *Sthula-Sarira* by the Tantriks, *Sarira* being derived from the root *Sr*, meaning to decay. Unlike the Christian doctrine, the Tantriks hold that there is no such thing as the resurrection of the same body. The soul (*Jivatma*), when released by death, reincarnates in a new body, while the old one turns to dust. Again, this equates with part of Gurdjieff's Sufi-inspired teaching.

On the other hand the Tantriks believe, like the alchemists, in the possibility of reducing matter to a single Prime Substance and of transmuting one element into another, because each is only one of the multiple manifestations of the underlying cosmic unity.






Avalon comments: 'Recent scientific research has shown that this original substance cannot be scientific "matter" – that is, that which has mass, weight and inertia. Matter has been dematerialized and reduced, according to current hypotheses, to something which differs profoundly from "matter" as known by the senses.' He is, of course, referring to the once widely-held concept of an all-pervading Ether, a scientific view which prevailed well into the present century and which is still

maintained as a convenient hypothesis by many occult philosophers.

The Hindus and other eastern cultures call this *Akasa*, which the magus Eliphas Levi, the Theosophist Madame Blavatsky and others have termed the Astral Light. It corresponds, to some degree, with the alchemical notion of Quintessence, the fifth essence, highest of all the principles or elements. In the Tantra system, these, beginning with the lowest and most gross, are:

1. *Prthivi* - Earth.
2. *Apas* - Water.
3. *Tejas* - Fire.
4. *Vayu* - Air.
5. *Akasa* - Quintessence, or Ether.

In Tantricism, each of these elements is assigned a colour and a symbol. They are held to make up the material universe and the human body and each is said to have a centre of force in the *chakras*. These colours, symbols and bodily centres, in ascending order, are:

1. *Prthivi* (Earth); Yellow;  ; *Muladhara* (base of spine.)
2. *Apas* (Water); White;  ; *Svadhithana* (spinal centre above genitals.)
3. *Tejas* (Fire); Red;  ; *Manipura* (spinal centre, navel region.)
4. *Vayu* (Air); Smoky grey;  ; *Anahata* (spinal centre, heart region.)
5. *Akasa* (Quintessence); White;  : *Vishuddi* (spinal centre, throat region.)

Matter is said to exist in these five states of solid, fluid, fiery, aerial and etheric. The more gross the element, the more of the senses are able to perceive it.

It may be said then that in the process of *Kundalini-Yoga* - and in alchemy - the ultimate object is the raising of these qualities or vibrations of gross matter to its highest and most sublime degree.

One aspect of Tantricism, however, which is rarely treated in any depth in Western interpretations of the practices, is that

of so-called ritual sex-magic. This is a method of raising *Kundalini* through the will and imagination, aided by psycho-sexual energy. Because it concentrates on the left-hand, lunar aspect of creation, which is considered female, as opposed to the right-hand, solar, male current, it is known as *Vama Marg*, or the Left-Hand Path. Unfortunately, ill-informed Western commentators have interpreted this as denoting a form of 'black magic,' especially in the light of the Western restricted, and prejudiced view of sexuality. It is no such thing. There is no white or black magic - only magic. The *intent* of the magician is what might be considered to colour or taint a form of magic and the ultimate aim of *Kundalini-Yoga* and *Tantra* is of the highest possible moral nature - that of Supreme Illumination, one-ness with the godhead. Any operant who, along the way, strives to attain *siddhis* or occult powers purely for personal gain or self-aggrandisement, or in order to cause harm to others, can not be considered a true adherent of the doctrine.

Although most Western expositions of Tantra are wanting - usually through ignorance - on the subject of the Tantric mysteries, there are some Occidental practitioners. One of the best and most detailed analyses of the system is contained in Kenneth Grant's quartet of books, *The Magical Revival*, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*, *Cults of the Shadow* and *Nightside of Eden*.¹

Grant was a pupil of the much-misunderstood Aleister Crowley and is today the international head of a surviving, reformulated Thelemite (i.e., Crowleyan) magical order, the Ordo Templi Orientis. He is one of the most detailed and lucid interpreters of Crowley's system of magic - especially his little understood techniques of sex-magic, which have their roots in Tantricism, as applied in the O.T.O.

In these books Grant unfolds some of the arcana underlying the Left-Hand Path.

The bodily centres, or *chakras*, are also often referred to in Tantrik texts as *padma*, or lotuses, the mystical sacred flower of the Orient which in some senses corresponds to the mystic rose of European mysticism. In a manner reminiscent of Fulcanelli's

¹ All published by Frederick Muller Ltd., 1972-76.

'phonetic' cabala, Grant interprets the lotus as the 'flower, or flow-er; the flowing one that gathers together all the mystical essences, "stars", or *kalas* of the human body, and conveys them via the pudendum to the sacred leaf ready to receive them.' The symbolism of these *kalas*, or sacred emanations, should already be obvious.

Grant goes on to explain that the 'lotus' composed of these essences, 'flowers in the vaginal emanations that flow from the priestess.' He says that these secretions of the human body are used in the various magical rites and to consecrate various talismans.

Crowley himself, in a letter to one of his magical disciples, quoted by Grant, actually equates the word 'secret' as used in his grimoire, *The Book of the Law*, not with the idea of something withheld, but with 'secretion.'

Grant, who has access to esoteric interpretations of Tantrik ritual and practice, quotes an extract from an 'initiated comment on a sacred *tantra*':

'What is not (generally) known is that these secretions are not mere excretions but are valuable fluids which contain in themselves the secretions of the endocrine glands in a much purer form, and more fit for human use than the gland extracts and dessicated gland products of the present-day organo-therapy. It must be remembered that the extracts of the endocrine glands, chemically made, are taken from the dead glands of animals, which lack certain essences that exist only in living beings, also they are different in humans from what they are in animals. The secretions of women are made *in the laboratory of the Deity, the Temple of the Mother*, and they supply just what is needed by the human in just the right proportions.'² (My italics.)

One of these *kalas*, or secretions, known as the *sadhakya kala*, which Grant says is the most secret of all, 'is *the essence where time stands still*; where time is NOT.' (My italics.)

Again, he quotes his unnamed tantrik commentator:

² Quoted in *The Magical Revival* and in *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God*, op cit.

'Of the three kinds of fluids the urine is the least and the weakest; *rajas*, or menstrual secretion is next; and *bind-hu* - the last, is a secretion not at present known to the West, and obtainable only by means of the *Shakta-Tantra* and their analogies in Mongolia, Tibet, China, Peru, Mexico and elsewhere; *a fluid that bisexualises man and woman and rejuvenates to an extraordinary extent.*' (My italics.)

The commentator goes on to say that at least sixteen different types of bodily fluids from women are used in the East - the 16th itself being the secret *sadhakya kala*, also known as the *kala* or ray of the Moon, or of value. He suggests that these secretions, obtained via secret tantrik rites, carry valuable substances from the cerebro-spinal fluid and from the endocrine glands.

'For it is known that there is a nerve governing micturation in the floor of the third ventricle, and a nerve directly connecting that centre with the bladder; along this nerve there passes some part of the secretion within the third ventricle, with which the pituitary body, pineal gland and other parts of the brain are in direct communication.'³

In partial support of these concepts, Grant cites Havelock Ellis' work, *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, in which he says that only fourteen of the *seventeen* bodily secretions known in Tantricism are recognized by Western science. Grant says:

'These numbers, are related to the lotus petals of certain erogenous zones. The secretions are related to the days and nights of the dark and bright fortnights which constitute one lunar cycle, culminating in the Full Moon, sometimes called the *16th digit of the Moon.*' (My italics.)

Grant concedes that 'the mysterious science of Alchemy approximates closely to the Tantric doctrine of the *Kalas*,' but he says that alchemical texts are not as systematized as the Tantrik system.

Quoting Crowley, he points out that the metals of the alchemists were 'living substances.' And he suggests that these

³ *The Magical Revival*.

metals - or medicines - were classified, according to whether they were solar or lunar-generated, or whether they were formed by 'mixed currents of creative energy.' These three classifications, he suggests, equate with the philosophical gold, silver and mercury of the alchemists, or, in the Eastern system, with sulphur, salt and mercury.

Earlier, I expressed the opinion that I did not believe that the secret of alchemy was necessarily allied to Tantrik practice, for the simple reason that many alchemists operated alone. They could not therefore, avail themselves of the secret *kalas*, or essences from the bodies of *women*. But, perhaps significantly, many alchemical illustrations actually show a male and female, usually designated the King and Queen or the Sun and the Moon, in coitus.

However, there is a possibility that the *key* substances necessary for the attainment of the Philosopher's Stone *could* be generated within the alchemist's body, working alone. This may well be the real meaning of Eugene Canseliet's reference to the 1922 'transmutation' he says he witnessed in the 'gasworks' at Sarcelles - a gasworks being, as Walter Lang has pointed out, a place where a heavy mineral is refined into a volatile matter. In other words, the 'gasworks' of the human body. Canseliet himself was born at Sarcelles and it may be that his own body was the 'gasworks' alluded to. It is always as well to remember that the alchemists were often speaking guardedly when they appeared to be at their most straightforward.

The key to the possibility of self-generated alchemical essences is given by Kenneth Grant, in a reference to the already mentioned 16th *kala*, which the Tantriks are said to keep secret. Grant says that, according to the Kaula Sect of *Vama Marg* (the Left-Hand Path),

'the trees of heaven are the five bosoms of the fourth, third and fifth ventricles of the brain, the pituitary and the pineal gland. The Tree of Life itself is equated with the pineal gland, *which contains the 16th ray, or digit, of the Moon*. From this flows "*the nectar of supreme excellence*."' (My italics.)

Since the pineal gland, unlike some of the more subtle

sexual centres, is common to both men and women, it is quite possible that the secret ingredient of alchemy, which is projected upon the working substances within the crucible or retort, is some form of secretion, altered and extracted in a highly mysterious manner, from the pineal. Occultists have for long equated this gland with the Third Eye of the Eastern magical tradition, whose opening is said to confer all kinds of arcane powers, including the ability to view the human aura and a consciousness expanded to cosmic proportions.

It will be as well to recall here what Fulcanelli's reply was when Bergier asked him what the real nature of alchemy consisted in. He said:

'The secret of alchemy is that there exists a means of manipulating matter and energy so as to create what modern science calls a force-field. This force-field acts upon the observer and puts him in a privileged position in relation to the universe. From this privileged position he has access to realities that space and time, matter and energy, normally conceal from us. This is what we call the Great Work.'

The pineal gland produces a sand-like substance known as melatonin, a discovery made in 1959 by Aaron Lerner of Yale University. A year later it was determined that melatonin was manufactured from serotonin, an unusual substance found, among many places, in the blood, the hypothalamus region of the brain, in dates, bananas, plums - and in a species of fig found in tropical climes and known as *ficus religiosus*. Serotonin was first extracted from rye grain which was infected with a parasitic fungus called ergot, which is synthetically produced today as the hallucinogenic drug LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide.) In some way as yet not fully understood, LSD can produce a sensation of intensified consciousness, of cosmic awareness and one-ness, by seemingly blocking out the rational faculties of the mind. It is suggested by some scientists that LSD somehow alters the concentration of serotonin in the brain cells - and in the pineal gland. It has also been postulated in the light of this, that the sacred bo-tree beneath which the Buddha sat and meditated was none other than the *ficus religiosus* plant, which provided his diet - and his means of Illumination.

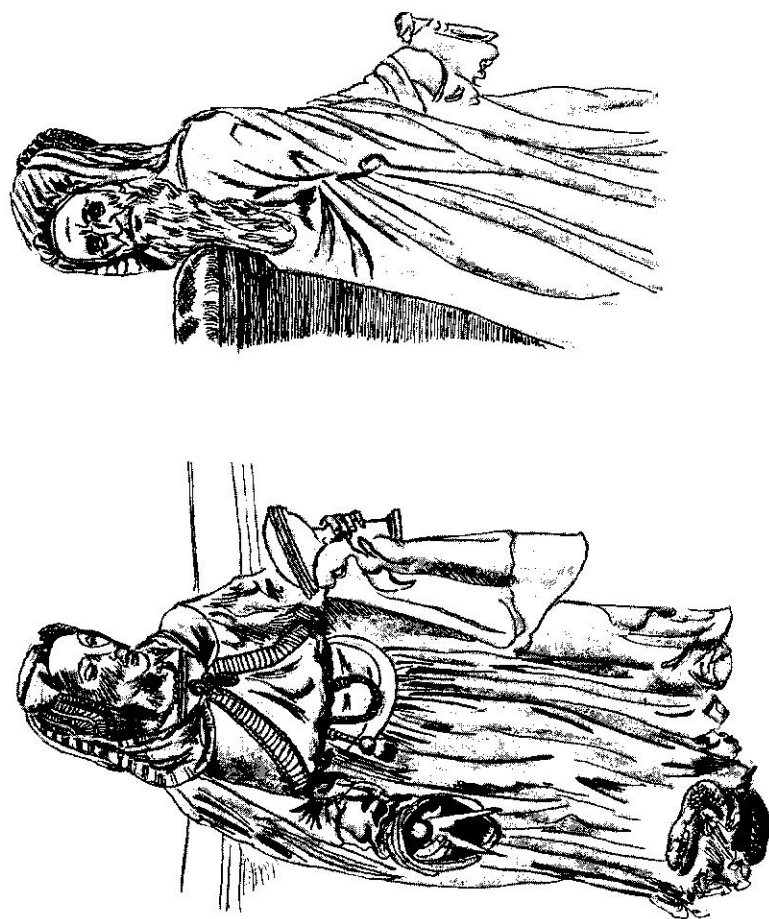


Fig. 18. The sculpted figure of Prudence (front and rear) in Nantes Cathedral.

We have already noted the references by Grant and his initiated Tantrik commentator to the fact that the secret, 16th *kala* is in some way connected with the concept of time standing still and that it 'bisexualises man and woman and rejuvenates to an extraordinary extent.'

These two references are too approximate to the alchemical objective to be coincidental.

We have, on the one hand, Canseliet's experience of seeing Fulcanelli apparently transformed into a woman - at least facially - and on the other, suggestions that there is some arcane substance which can bring about this state, along with longevity and Illumination. Although the systems of Tantra, the developmental techniques of Sufism and of Gurdjieff may not be identical with the working methods of alchemy, it is clear that their ends are highly similar. Perhaps, then, the same results might be obtained by different techniques.

In *Les Demeures Philosophales*, Fulcanelli draws attention to a curious sculpted statue - one of four - which stands at a corner of the Tomb of François II in Nantes Cathedral. He calls it the figure of Prudence. (See Fig. 18)

Viewed from the front, it is the figure of a young and beautiful girl, dressed in a hood, cloak and long-flowing gown, apparently gazing at her reflection in an unusual convex mirror. But on the back of the figure's head is another face - that of a long-bearded, wise-looking old man.

Fulcanelli equates this figure of Prudence with the god Janus, son of Apollo and Creusa and says that, enfolded in the cloak 'of Philosophy', she represents Nature in all her aspects, both inward and outward.

But beneath the exterior veil of Prudence, he says, there appears the mysterious image of ancient alchemy 'and we are, through the attributes of the first, initiated into the secrets of the second.'

Later, he says:

'It is generally recommended to unite "an old man, hale and vigorous, with a young and beautiful virgin." Of these alchemical nuptials, a metallic child is born and receives the epithet of *androgyne*, because he possesses all at once the nature of sulphur, his father, and that of his mother,

mercury ... When the wise talk of their *androgyné*, they intend to designate under the name the artificially composed form of sulphur and mercury ... It indicates therefore the previous possession of a sulphur and of a mercury, *isolated* or *extracted*, and not of a body directly generated by nature, from the issue of the conjunction of the old man and the young virgin ...

'But now, elementary logic leads us to search for the generators of sulphur and mercury if we want to obtain, through their union, the philosophical *androgyné*, otherwise called *rebis*, *Compositum de compositis*, living mercury, etc., the proper material of the Elixir. Of these original chemical parents of sulphur and mercury, the one remains always the same and is the virgin mother; as for the old man, his role fulfilled, he owes it to give place to the great youth of the other. Thus, these two conjunctions engender firstly an offspring of different sex; the sulphur, of dry and fiery nature, and mercury of a "lymphatic and melancholy" temperament. It is this which Philalethes and d'Espagnet wish to teach in saying that "our virgin is perhaps a bride twice without losing her virginity." By the others [alchemists], it is expressed in a very obscure manner, and they are content to assure us that "the sun and the moon of the sky are not the stars of the philosophers." One is given to understand by this that the artist never finds the parents of the stone directly prepared in nature, and that it owes its formation to a meeting of the hermetic sun and moon, if it is not allowed to be frustrated of the previous fruit of their alliance.' ⁴

Although Fulcanelli is by no means entirely explicit here, the analogies with the concepts of Tantricisim should be obvious. Later on, Fulcanelli draws attention to the serpent 'coiled upon itself', which is depicted by the right foot of the statue of Prudence. And again, although he does not refer directly to Tantric terms, such as the *Kundalini-Sakti* or Serpent Power, he does call it 'the motive power, the animator

⁴ *Les Demeures Philosophales*, Vol. II, pp. 276-280, (Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Paris, 1964.)

of the great work' and points to the principal secret of the Great Work as the ability to 'kill the living', i.e., the unawakened, mundane body and psyche, and 'revivify the dead,' the slumbering serpent-power principle which brings about Illumination. He quotes the well-known alchemical axiom of *solve et coagula* which is said to embody the key of the Work - 'dissolve (the body) and coagulate (the spirit.)'

The concept of the Androgyné is not, of course, a purely physical or sexual consideration. Its main underlying theme appears to be one of stability, of harmony, of perfect balance - in all possible respects. This is partially reflected in a section of the Qabalah, known as the Lesser Holy Assembly, or Synod. It would also appear to equate with the allegorical speech of Aristophanes in Plato's *Symposium*.

A. E. Waite's assessment of the relevant passages in the Qabalah would seem to sum up the philosophical underpinnings of the androgyné concept adequately. He says that the Qabalistic doctrine of the sexes:

'... so much in advance of its time, in whatever Christian century we may elect to place the literature, namely, that male and female separated are but an incomplete humanity, or, as the text expresses the idea, are but half the body; that no blessing can rest on what is mutilated and defective; that no divided being can subsist for ever or receive an eternal dowry "for the beauty of the female is completed by the beauty of the male ..." "When the Bride is united to the King in the excellence of the Sabbath, then are all things made one body." And then the most Holy God sitteth on His throne, then all things enter and are integrated in the One Undivided, Perfect and Holy Name. "When the Mother is united to the King, the worlds receive a blessing and are found in the joy of the universe." ' ⁵

Similarly, Plato's allegory - which he places in the mouth of the playwright Aristophanes - suggests that, originally, human beings were bi-sexual. But, because they angered the gods, in

⁵ *The Holy Kabbalah*, (Citadel Press, New Jersey, n.d.) The quotations used by Waite are from the *Idra Zouta, seu Synodus Minor*, xxii, par. 746 et seq.)

particular Zeus, he separated them. Consequently, ever since, opposites have always sought reunion.

This concept would also seem to square in a sense with the interpretation of *Genesis*, propounded by many Qabalists, which infers that original man was of an androgyne nature: 'So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; *male and female created he them.*' (Genesis 1, 27.)

But whether or not we are meant to suppose that fulfilment of the alchemical quest has physical side effects, there is some suggestion within occult tradition that a balance achieved inwardly can have outward physical effects.

There is a striking passage in Jung's *Mysterium Coniunctionis* in which he draws attention to *Die Gnosis des Christentums* (1939), by Georg Koepgen, a book which treats of the theme of androgyny in connection with Christ.

Jung prefaces his quotations from Koepgen's book with the following remarks:

'The *lapis* was decidedly an ideal for hermits, a goal for isolated individuals. Besides that, it was a food (*cibus immortalis*), could be multiplied indefinitely, was a living being with body, soul and spirit, an androgyne with incorruptible body, etc ...

'In this connection it should not be forgotten that in antiquity certain influences, evidently deriving from the Gnostic doctrine of the hermaphroditic Primordial Man, penetrated into Christianity and there gave rise to the view that Adam had been created an androgyne. And since Adam was the prototype of Christ, and Eve, sprung from his side, that of the Church, it is understandable that a picture of Christ should develop showing distinctly feminine features. In religious art the Christ-image has retained this character to the present day. Its veiled androgyny reflects the hermaphroditism of the *lapis*, which in this respect has more affinity with the views of the Gnostics.'

Turning to Koepgen's work, Jung then says:

'Of the Apollonian-Dionysian conflict in antiquity, Koepgen says it found its solution in Christianity because "in the

person of Jesus, the male is united with the female." "Only in him do we find this juxtaposition of male and female in unbroken unity." "If men and women can come together as equals in Christian worship, this has more than an accidental significance: it is the fulfilment of the androgyny that was made manifest in Christ."'

Jung observes that the change of sex in the believer is suggested in *Revelation* 14, 4: 'These are they that were not defiled with women; for they are virgins.'

And he quotes Koepgen's comment on this passage:

'"Here the new androgynous form of existence becomes visible. Christianity is neither male nor female, it is male-female in the sense that the male paired with the female in Jesus's soul. In Jesus the tension and polaristic strife of sex are resolved in an androgynous unity. And the Church, as his heir, has taken this over from him: she too is androgynous." As regards her constitution the Church is "hierarchically masculine, yet her soul is thoroughly feminine."'

Jung comments:

'For Koepgen, therefore, not only Christ is androgynous, but the Church as well, a remarkable conclusion the logic of which one cannot deny. The consequence of this is a special emphasis on bisexuality and then on the peculiar identity of the Church with Christ, which is based also on the doctrine of the *corpus mysticum*. This certainly forestalls the marriage of the Lamb at the end of time, for the androgyne "has everything it needs," and is already a *complexio oppositorum*.'⁶

These are indeed deep philosophical and theological considerations, but at least we may see in them a glimmer of the alchemical outlook on the subject of androgyny. The anonymous author of the *Tractatus aureus*, sometimes ascribed to Hermes, expresses the concept more prosaically:

'As the shadow continually follows the body of one who

⁶ *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Col. Works, Vol. 14, 2nd ed., pp. 372-4, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974.)

walks in the sun, so our hermaphroditic Adam, though he appears in the form of a male, nevertheless always carries about with him Eve, or his wife, *hidden in his body*.⁷ (My italics.)

What would seem to happen to the successful Adept then, is that when the inner self conjoins more completely with the outer self, the component masculinity and femininity are harmonised, with neither predominating. This applies whether the Adept is originally male or female and the end results are the same. In neither case is there a necessity for an actual loss of sexuality nor indeed for a total sex change.

It has been noted, however, that physical changes can occur in the facial features of the subject which close the gap between the sexual polarities and can be taken either as male or female.

But what are we to make of Canseliet's claim that Fulcanelli was actually *dressed* as a woman – and a woman in 16th century costume at that?

Once again, these are areas in which one can only speculate. But by inference, Canseliet's presence in Fulcanelli's Spanish castle would seem to have been some kind of initiatory test. And, as we have seen in the case of the Sufis and similar mystical fraternities, initiation rites can take many strange forms which are often inscrutable or even meaningless to the profane outsider.

The late Gerard Heym claimed that Canseliet had only a vague recollection of his entire visit to Spain; that he remembered only certain of his experiences there – such as the colony of resident alchemists and the peculiar costumes they wore. Heym deduced from these factors that perhaps Canseliet, following his testing, underwent some form of hypnosis, designed to erase from his mind the essentials of what actually happened. Again by inference, that process was not entirely successful – perhaps even intentionally – and only the more bizarre elements of his experiences lingered in his conscious memory.

As we have seen, on his own admission, Canseliet himself

⁷ Included in *Bibliotheca Chemicae Curiosa*, J. J. Mangetus, (Cologne, 1702.)

has failed to perfect the Third Degree of the Work. So it is therefore not unreasonable to assume that he similarly 'failed' whatever tests he may have undergone during his Spanish stay. Otherwise, would he not naturally have been allowed to remain at Fulcanelli's castle colony to continue his work? Or, failing that, might he not at least have been charged with some other task – that of continuing to disseminate the teachings of his Master and his own school of alchemy?

It may be that this latter course is indeed Canseliet's obligatory role, one that he initiated and has perpetuated ever since the publication of Fulcanelli's two works. On the other hand, Canseliet returned to France with only a vague and incomplete picture of the nature of his ordeal. Since then, as far as is known, he has had no further contact with his Master.

The inference of these conclusions is extremely sad. Especially in view of Canseliet's unflagging and continuing devotion to Fulcanelli, his work and to his own attempts to further the Great Work itself.

After more than sixty years of work and study, the elderly French alchemist has not been able to follow in the footsteps of his illustrious Master and to join the ranks of the Illuminated Adepts, the Secret Brethren who have mysteriously appeared among mankind throughout history and, equally mysteriously, vanished.

But, it would appear, there is no room for sentimentalism or even favouritism within the aura of the Secret Brotherhood and the great secrets and powers it supposedly possesses and guards.

If this is indeed the situation in Canseliet's case, there would appear to remain, however, one open area, one unfinished commitment. According to alchemical tradition, the successful Adept has only three primary obligations:

1. To become more than human; to raise and develop himself into a Perfected Being.
2. To leave for posterity a non-explicit record of his own work – in keeping with the considerations we examined earlier of the alchemical 'failsafe' system.
3. To select and give adequate impulse to a successor, an 'alchemical son' or heir.

Fulcanelli would certainly appear to have met the first two

conditions. As we have seen, his would-be successor, Canseliet, for some reason has not fulfilled the role of the third adequately. It would seem reasonable to assume, therefore, that Fulcanelli requires an alternative choice of successor.

While Canseliet has played an important role in perpetuating the name and work of his Master, it is obvious that someone other than he would have been singled out to take on the mantle of Fulcanelli's 'alchemical son.'

One man, who through necessity must remain nameless here, has to some extent guided and helped me during the formulation and writing of this book. Next to Canseliet, he is possibly one of the most knowledgeable students of Fulcanelli's work in the world today. When I last saw him, he told me that early in 1980 he is returning to his home in the East when he will be embarking alone upon the Great Work.

I wish him every success.

VIII

Conclusion

Within the human body there is hidden a certain metaphysical substance, known only to the very few, whose essence it is to need no medicament, for it is itself uncorrupted medicament. There is in natural things a certain truth which cannot be seen with the outward eye but is perceived by the mind alone. The philosophers have known it and they have found that its power is so great as to work miracles ... In this lies the whole art of freeing the spirit from its fetters ... it is the highest power and an impregnable fortress wherein the philosopher's stone lies guarded.

- Gerhard Dorn, pupil of Paracelsus.

WE HAVE journeyed a long way, from the ancient land of the Pyramids, through the Mysteries of pre-Christian cultures, the mysticism and magic of the secret fraternities who enshrined their arcane wisdom in written and sculptured cipher, down to the present-day aura of the elusive Fulcanelli, Master Alchemist.

I do not expect that every one of my readers will either fully comprehend, appreciate nor indeed accept, all of the doctrines, mysteries and ideals which have been set forth in this book.

But I have attempted to show that the everyday world of the limited senses of the average human being is not the total, infinite reality; that there lies, beyond mundane considerations, a much more profound and glorious region that connects both the inner space of the entire human psyche and the outer space of the entire majestic Creation.

So far as I am concerned, men, or rather Men, like Fulcanelli, are more important to the progress of unenlightened mankind than those who, over the past few decades, have broken down

the barriers of outer space and set foot - in person or by mechanised proxy - on other worlds.

For in the same way that the Total Science of Alchemy does not consist merely in the transmutation of base metals into gold, neither do the physical, technological conquests of orthodox science necessarily represent man's true evolution or ultimate destiny.

In choosing to relegate many of the ancient philosophical and metaphysical doctrines to the decay of locked vaults and unexplored library shelves, man has in a sense let his superficial, material progress outrun his spiritual fulfilment.

As the great sages and mystics of all ages have frequently insisted: Before one can properly look outward with clear vision, it is first necessary to look inward.

On his own record of tragic self-mismanagement, of his abuse of himself and his fellow-men, of his indifference to the elements of Nature which still sustain him, man has failed in this obligation. Yet, despite this, there have been Men who perhaps in some way have made up for such neglectful deficiency.

It is to the words of these fulfilled Beings, these Perfected Ones, and not to the temporal babblings of fickle politicians, of irresponsible scientists, dogmatic theologians, greedy and unscrupulous lords of commerce and industry, nor even to the confused and self-destructive rantings of the mass media, that we should be listening, if we are to take our proper place on the ladder of Evolution.

The Secret Masters do not direct, command or coerce. They merely advise, guide and instruct.

As Fulcanelli himself has indicated, we may not have an unlimited time in which to realize our ultimate and rightful evolutionary potential. But there is always hope.

Let us therefore seek encouragement in the magnificent words of such a sublime spirit, a man who conquered death itself:

'It is at the time when bodily inertia asserts itself, at the same hour when Nature finishes her work, that the Wise Man finally begins his own. Let us therefore lean towards the abyss, let us scrutinize its depths, rummage through the darkness which covers it, and the Void will instruct us. Birth teaches us few things, but death, from which life is born, can reveal all. It alone holds the keys of the laboratory of nature; it alone

delivers the spirit, imprisoned in the midst of the material body. Shadow, bestower of light, sanctuary of truth, asylum violated by wisdom, it hides and jealously withholds its treasures from timorous mortals, the indecisive, the sceptical, all those who disregard or dare not confront it.

'For the Philosopher, death is simply a transformation like that of the caterpillar into butterfly, which links the material plane to the divine. It is the earthly door opened to the heavens, the link between nature and divinity; it is the chain which joins those who yet live to those who have passed on. And if human evolution, in its physical sense, can of its own will dispose of the past and present, then in its turn it is death alone which belongs to the future.

'Consequently, far from inspiring a feeling of horror or repulsion in the Wise, death, the instrument of salvation, appears to him both useful and necessary. And if we are not allowed to allot to ourselves the fixed time for our proper destiny, at least we have received the permission of the Eternal to call it forth from the grave matter, in accordance and submission to the orders of God, and to the will of man.

'One can thus understand why the Philosophers place so much insistence upon the necessity of material death. It is through death that the spirit, imperishable and always active, stirs up, sifts, separates, cleans and purifies the body. It is from death that there proceeds the possibility of assembling the purified parts, to build with them a new lodging place, finally to transmit to the regenerated form an energy which it does not possess.'

- *Les Demeures Philosophales*, Vol. II, pp. 324-5.



FINIS SED INCEPTIO EST

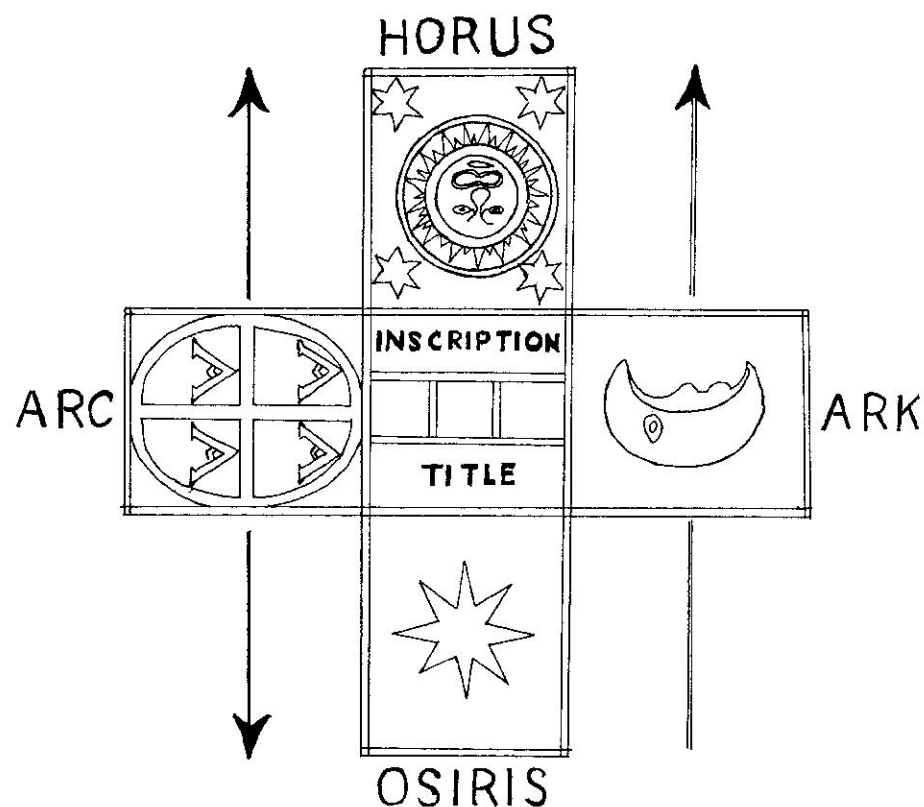


Fig. 20. Symbolism of the four base panels of the Cyclic Cross of Hendaye, (exploded outwards to give an overview of the monument.)

EPILOGUE IN STONE

Afterword by Paul Mevryl

(The following is a commentary on *The Cyclic Cross of Hendaye*, which forms Fulcanelli's penultimate chapter in *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*. The author is a retired engineer, has an interest in cryptograms and has studied alchemy, Fulcanelli and other areas of arcane knowledge for many years.)

WATCH AND PRAY TIME HASTES AWAY.

- Inscription on the clock-face of St. Madron Church, mother church of Penzance, Cornwall.

THIS book is ultimately about Fulcanelli, and it is perhaps fitting to conclude where he completed his great statement in *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* - at Hendaye. In so doing, we shall not presume to expand his alchemical commentary, but rather to lift a corner of the veil obscuring one vehicle of that teaching. We refer to the underlying chiliasm¹ whose antecedents are no less ancient than those of alchemy itself. In this way, a partial separation of meaning and levels of meaning is possible, becoming an exercise that is both interesting to the casual reader and helpful to the student of Hermeticism.

The Cyclic Cross at Hendaye is a statement in stone about The Stone and a record of the fact of success in the Great Work by an unknown man. Simultaneously, it is an observation upon the nature and timing of tremendous world events involving yet another kind of stone. Presently, we will permit the monument to speak for itself.

Firstly, however, let us ask ourselves why the alchemist placed his record at Hendaye. There is certainly no other

¹ Chiliasm: millenarism, or doctrine of belief in the millenium.

indication that it was the scene of his triumph, except in the possibility that it was so because the monument was originally erected in the local cemetery. More significantly, perhaps, Hendaye lies hard by the ancient pilgrim route to Compostella. The route that Nicholas Flamel and other seekers before and after him walked, staff in hand. However, it is the name that is important, because it transcends mere coincidence.

Phonetically, it gives:

Hen Day - End Day - Ande

Or:

Egg - Apocalypse - Mountain.

The fact that these are the phonetics of *English* words should not surprise us. English has replaced Latin as the world language - a fact that would have been foreseen by a truly illuminated man of recent centuries, looking into our own times. The Egg is the philosophical Egg of alchemy, reminding us of Flamel's 'little poulet.' This place name demonstrates the presence at Hendaye of a double teaching.

There are other reasons. Immediately following the Atlantean catastrophe, the pitifully small remnants of that multi-million-strong civilisation reached safety along the new shore-lines of the Atlantic basin.²

Among the survivors were the earliest Iberians who settled and eventually gave their name to the Spanish peninsula. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that today we find the purest European descendants flourishing near the centre of the Biscay arc. These are the Basques, survivors of the last cyclic catastrophe to overwhelm mankind and who have had a unique tribute to chiliasm set down on their border. Through this strange device, a memory is preserved and a warning transmitted from Iron Age to Iron Age - nearly 12,000 years.³

In no ordinary way can we comprehend such a span of time or understand directly how *real knowledge* can be transmitted over such a period. So, let us look at this in the following way:

Take an old-fashioned one-foot ruler, graduated in inches

and sixteenths of an inch. Look at that scale. Visualise the twelve inches as 12,000 years. Then each inch becomes 1,000 years and each sixteenth of an inch but *one man's lifetime* of a mere 62½ years. The whole span of 12,000 years represents only a series of 192 such lifetimes. Knowledge and teaching transmitted a mere 200 times is hardly inconceivable even to we short-lived creatures.

Within the last inch of our scale, we see the renewal of the western alchemical tradition in the Iberian peninsula, and very close to the zero of today, the erection of the Cyclic Cross at Hendaye. Here then, is a tribute to a long medley of more-than-human endeavour and an indication that there is an unbroken purpose at work in history. It is also a reasonable point upon the time-scale to place a prediction that time is running out and that the Age is about to end.

Yet we have here prediction, not prophecy. Prophecy implies seership - long-sightedness, of being accurately informed about future time, coupled with a measure of certainty often not intended by the prophet himself. The Christian Bible is full of prophetic utterances that are for the most part *warnings* rather than statements of *inexorable fact*.

The most complete prophecy concerning our own time was made by Jesus Christ, as recorded in the 13th Chapter of St. Mark's Gospel. The entire chapter is devoted to it. Perhaps the most unbiased and intelligent layman to examine this prophecy in our own time was the late M. K. Jessup - writer and astronomer.⁴

He assumed simplistically that Jesus meant precisely what He said and that He had been reported correctly. In view of the many arguments regarding translation, no other working view seemed possible. Despite this obvious limitation, a tremendous light is thrown on the whole notion of chiliasm which, indeed, owes its very origin to this great utterance of Christ. (That is, chiliasm *per se*, as distinct from contextual knowledge transmitted from the far past on cyclic catastrophes.)

Jesus took a penetrating look into and through our own times to the future events symbolised at Hendaye. We can be reasonably sure that they are in our own times since He put

² *Atlantis, The Antediluvian World*: Ignatius Donnelly, (re-edited Egerton Sykes.)

³ Plato: *The Timaeus*

⁴ *UFOs and the Bible*, Citadel Press, New York.

together a number of more or less simultaneous events that could only occur separately in other epochs. As Jessup pointed out: 'only *we* can recognise His description in its entirety.'

Jesus Christ did not date the end of this Age, but said, in verses 32 and 33:

'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

'Take ye heed, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is.'

Even He *did not know*. Here was a Man, superior in His Being and seership to any Nostradamus who, incidentally, named the fatal year as 1999.⁵ Jesus Christ may have known the year, even the month. He merely stated that He did not know the *day* or the *hour*.

Recently, during Skylab's final death-throes, astronomers with every modern instrumental aid did not know its *day* or *hour* either. There are certain parallels between its return to earth and the fall of a bolide from deep space that may have been the agent of the Atlantean disaster, an agent that could manifest again in our own times.⁶ It is fair to suggest that the precise timing may be beyond computation.

However, in this faint aura of uncertainty, is there a hint of a possible reprieve? The teaching of Mohammed as set down in *The Koran* is later than the Christian New Testament and therefore much nearer our own times.⁷ It is, in some respects, an addendum to the word of the *prophet*, Jesus of Nazareth.

Scarcely a page is not laden with terrible warnings of final destruction, and under the heading *The Star*, it says:

'... And that with Him is the *second creation*,
And that He enricheth and *causeth to possess*,
And that He is the *Lord of Sirius*,
And it was *He who destroyed* the ancient Adites,

⁵ Erika Cheetham, trans. & edit., *The Prophecies of Nostradamus* (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1973.)

⁶ Otto Muck: *The Secret of Atlantis* (William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., 1978; Fontana, 1979.)

⁷ *The Koran*, trans. from the Arabic by the Rev. J. M. Rodwell, M. A., (J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London.)

And the people of Themoud and left not one survivor,
And before them the *people of Noah*, who were most ... & etc.'

The italics are ours and are included to emphasize the exoteric and astronomical significance of this text to our theme. Under the heading of *Ya Sin*, *The Koran* says:

'... To the Sun it is not given to overtake the Moon, nor doth the night outstrip the day; but each in his own sphere doth journey on.

'It is also a sign to them that we bear their *posterity* in the full-laden *Ark*; And that we have made for them *vessels like it* on which they embark:

'And if we *please*, we drown them ...'

Throughout *The Koran* there is great repetition on the Flood theme, and many references to destruction by *stone-charged-winds*. Yet, it refers to posterity and a future Ark, or Arks, rather than the Ark of the Noachian Deluge.

Note the direct association of the *Lord of Sirius* with *The Star*, a star that can only be Sirius itself. The predynastic Egyptians would have named Him *Osiris*. Take note, too, of the royal 'we.' *Isis*, *Osiris* and *Horus*, perhaps, or an entire remnant of the Osirian race? God-like men rather than gods - immensely powerful and influential yet not the omnipotent, universal, creative Being. More cogently, perhaps, mentors and directors of terrestrial mankind? The Osirians said: 'If we please [choose].' The coinage of that choice has two sides - Them and us. Thus, within the highest levels of prophecy in Holy Writ there remains hope. A hope based upon astronomical realities.

According to the scientist, engineer and inventor, Otto Muck, the principal agent of the last catastrophe was a large bolide of asteroidal dimensions. He argues that it was probably deflected onto the Earth by a rare, but recurring alignment of Earth, Venus, Moon and Sun. Its impact, at the spot now known as the Puerto Rico Trench, smashed through Earth's crust, releasing volcanic forces of unimaginable violence. Coming suddenly, out of deep space, the outer layers of the great bolide fragmented high in the stratosphere producing a hail of huge rocks. These alone devastated a large area of

Carolina in the USA. Thus, the end of the last Iron Age began.

Now it is perfectly natural for our planet to encounter an occasional rock in space, although the volume of the space in which Earth swims is vast and *large* rocks exceedingly rare. However, there is in 12,000 years, plenty of time for a million misses to become a hit. The great stark fact about the Inner Solar system is that the surfaces of all the planets and moons that we can inspect show unmistakable signs of massive bombardment from space. Yet, Earth seems to be serenely exceptional to this terrible rule – the Atlantean impact notwithstanding. It is the largest of these bodies, yet its greater surface area appears to have attracted significantly fewer impacts. Had the Earth been scarred like the Moon, no amount of tectonic or meteorological activity could have erased the massive evidence. Our world would be a very different place and almost certainly lifeless.

Therefore let us not dismiss too quickly the notion – indeed, the reported statement – of a protective power, however we care to visualise it. Someone has *chosen* to give we men time to develop. Time between the *principal encounters* with streams of bolides from deep space. Or at least so it would seem.

In that event, the chiasm of Hendaye symbolises not *absolute prophecy* but an *accurate prediction* based directly upon humanity's actual experience over many Ages of cyclic time. Timings can be calculated; manifestations cannot. So, with this reservation in mind, let us interrogate the monument in an attempt to understand its inherent chiliastic teaching.

It consists of a square-shaped stone pedestal from the top centre of which rises a classical Greek column. Upon this column rests a simple stone Greek cross. The front of the cross carries the traditional Title-inscription I N R I (interpreted by exoteric Christianity as the initial letters of Iesus Nazarenus Rex Iudeorum – Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,) while on the reverse of the arm there is carried a modification of an old Latin inscription:

OCRUXAVES
PESUNICA

Immediately above this inscription, on the shaft above the arm, are the letters:

-
X
-
X
-

There are four panels chased into the sides of the pedestal, each carrying a different motif. These are shown in the accompanying illustration. For convenience, the four panels are exploded outwards into a cruciform and an overview of the entire monument taken. At first sight these motifs are:

1. A great Star.
2. A fairy-tale Man-in-the-Moon.
3. An angry, traditional Sun.
4. An ellipse with major and minor axes, plus a curious capital A in each quadrant.

We will now proceed to examine these in some depth. However, before we begin our actual interrogation, we must take precautions against the possibility of ascribing endless and arbitrary meanings to what we see before us. In the first instance, the symbolism is traditional in its form and disposition and the 'ground rules' outlined by Fulcanelli will apply. These resolve, in this case, in *seeing the obvious while seeking the profound*. The obvious is invariably simple, almost child-like in its quality, requiring a directness of mind not always associated with one given over to profound thought.

In its original position in the local cemetery – the Cross is nowadays by the south transept of the Hendaye parish church – this little monument would have been set down with its panels facing North, East, South and West. The cardinal, or *main*, points are thus associated with the four panels. This is confirmed by the motif on panel 4 symbolising and summarising the whole purpose of the monument. It is a circled cross, i.e., a cross that is circled, or *this cross* circled, instructing the observer to walk around it, studying each motif in a sequence. In this manner, the four cardinal points of meaning are encompassed. Here, as on the older maps, this sign enables us to find our way. We can take more than one such turn around the pedestal, each time seeking a different level of meaning into

which all four motifs harmonize and interlock.

There are not necessarily an equal number of alchemical and chiliastical meanings (turns around the base). Of the latter, we shall endeavour to outline only two.

Commencing in front of the monument we read the Title on the cross above and face the motif 1 of the great Star. Here, symbolically, is the dead Son who, phonetically, becomes the *dead Sun*. A dead star who, like Him, once shone out with a unique brightness. Each, in its own way, a new beginning for mankind. It is also the star present at His and our birth – a new or *nova* star. It is, as we shall see, an aspect of Sirius, the brightest star in the sky. After he had examined the pedestal, Fulcanelli knew how to decipher the Title and Inscription. He has given us the secret meaning of I N R I as 'In fire nature is renewed whole.'⁸ Thus, Title and motif are of a piece.

Sirius was venerated from the earliest times, especially by the Egyptians. They associated it with the god-name *Osiris*, whom they often invoked as the 'Lord of the day and night sun,' 'Lord of the two Earths,' 'Lord of the two Lands,' and more frequently as 'Lord of the Dead,' the *dark* god. Setting aside their later tortuous theological convolutions arising within an enfeebled priesthood, this cornerstone of their beliefs was rooted in the earliest experience and memory of our race. Old Egypt was perhaps the most sophisticated Atlantean colony to survive the Flood and, as such, would have been a principal vehicle for knowledge transmitted from and about the far past. The alchemist of Hendaye has employed some of that knowledge in an open and pure form.

Here – originally – the *dead* were those who perished with the *dying Sun*, or darkened Sun, or dark Son. Later, the *dead* became identified with those who perished at the end of each world Age. Even in these wholly exoteric terms of reference, there is clearly no shortage of dead worthy of such commemoration. How then did our progenitors survive their dying Sun?

Standing now before the motif of the Man-in-the-Moon, panel 2, we are struck by its resemblance to the Moon drawings of our *childhood*, where the crescent is associated with a human face. That face is always on the *dark* side, facing away from the

⁸ *Igné Natura Renovatur Integra: Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1971.)

Sun – encapsulated. An attempt to anthropomorphize and infer conscious purpose to an important natural phenomenon? That is what it became. But look at our diagram, where this Moon lies on its back. A boat, or barque, closely akin to the Egyptian reed boats, emerges. It even possesses a more modern feature – a hawse-hole, i.e., a hole for the hawser, or anchor-chain. This *vessel* has dropped anchor and is riding upon an invisible anchor-chain. It might, therefore, be the Moon now at anchor outside Earth, held by the invisible chain of gravitation. This *fairy-tale Moon*, this little *boat of our childhood*, is an *Ark*.⁹ Presumably, it is still available – waiting?

The Lord of Sirius said: '... we bear their posterity in the full-laden Ark!' If George H. Leonard is correct, the preparations are in full swing.¹⁰

Is the motif on panel 2 at Hendaye telling us that man used the little world we know as our Moon as an Ark to cross the immensity of interstellar space from Sirius to Sol? The motif is certainly placed between them on the pedestal and the Moon *does* face towards Sol. That strange little world where there are rocks older than the solid Earth and a 'soil' rich in titanium and other refractory elements typical of the atmosphere of a dying star. A case can be made out without real difficulty.

That journey would have followed a great curve several times longer than the 8.7 light years separating Sirius from Sol. It might have taken millennia, or at best centuries, even with forces under control, the nature of which we do not as yet understand. In that event, we find no difficulty in understanding the joy of Osiris upon finally finding Himself – 'steering in the pools' and His eulogy to the Goddess to whom He said: 'I will bring unto Thee cities.'¹¹

We move on to stand before that enigmatic Sun motif on panel 3. Here is the opposite view of the *concealed* star of panel 1 and of the dying god, or dog. As in a mirror, the star remains a star but the word god becomes transposed into *dog*. We are

⁹ Don Wilson: *Our Mysterious Spaceship Moon*, (Sphere Books, London.)

¹⁰ George H. Leonard: *Someone Else is on our Moon*, (Sphere Books, London.)

¹¹ G. A. Gaskell: *Egyptian Scriptures Interpreted*, trans. of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, Chapter CX, (C. W. Daniel Co., London.)

viewing the *Dog star* from our solar system. The Star is thus identified with *Sirius*, and the *Sun behind the Sun* - an *invisible Sun*. Is this star *Sirius B*? The star that is always set - is *Set*?

Our angry traditional sun is framed by a near-perfect square of lesser stars. Yet we know that there is no such constellation in the zodiac that Sol circles in the course of each terrestrial year. Neither does Sol shine at night when such stars are visible. There is, therefore, something in this motif of panel 3 of more than usual significance.

The constellation itself can only be the Square of Pegasus - the Horse. Phonetically, this gives us *Horus* manifesting in this sign. Here too is His disc, the *Disc of Ra*, in which He becomes the *destroyer of men*. The angry face in the fiery disc confirms this interpretation of the *Horus-Man* or, more familiarly to us - *The Horseman of the Apocalypse*.

This association of cyclic catastrophe with a constellation in the northern sky fixed for Fulcanelli and for us the Northern Hemisphere of Earth as the scene of the predicted devastation.

In its alternative meaning as Sol, we see its disc shining at the peak of its heat and light. Thus, on the End Day, timing of the event is possible. Fulcanelli observes, when writing about the significance of the letter Xs (above the arm of the Cross):

'I had already been enlightened by studying the pedestal and knew in what way and by means of what key the Christian inscription of the monument should be read; but I was anxious to show investigators what help may be obtained in solving hidden matters from plain common sense, logic and reasoning.' He also wrote: '... the sun, having arrived at the zenith of its curve across space, at the time of the cyclic catastrophe.'¹²

For the moment, we are concerned only with the pedestal motifs. However, as we shall see, it is significant that the motif on panel 3 lies directly beneath the Inscription to which Fulcanelli referred. The four stars or Astres, or Apparitions, also inform us that there are four Appearances in the fiery round of Horus. These then are the *four children of Horus* each at a cardinal point of the cyclic cross.

¹² Fulcanelli, op cit.

Continuing our turn around the monument, we move to our fourth and final position in front of the motif on panel 4 of the circled cross. Like the motif on panel 2 it has been placed significantly between the Star on panel 1 and the Sun on panel 3. Therefore it represents a connection between them, the nature of which is clearly shown in the motif itself. As depicted upon its rectangular panel, the traditional circle has become an ellipse. Is this simply rude or careless workmanship or a deliberate variation - one of the signs 'put in on purpose', mentioned by Fulcanelli? Only an *elliptical path* of something, or somethings, orbiting the two stars makes astronomical sense here. *Sirius* and *Sol* would then each occupy one focus of that ellipse. There may be other such interstellar ellipses coupling *Sirius* to other neighbouring stars.

This then would be the path of Horus, son of Osiris - *Horus the Elder*. It is also the *Heavenly Nile* over which the *parts of the dead Osiris* were strewn. Possibly the greatest and most traumatic experience in human protohistory. Symbolised in the very earliest times and much later localised and associated with the river Nile by the Egyptians. Something of that tremendous epic backdrop is here beginning to emerge, thanks to the care lavished upon these time-worn symbols of its transmission. Arranged in this way, they are far less ambiguous than the related myths.

Each quadrant of the Circled Cross bears a large capital A of unusual form. It is the traditional symbol of an *Age* or an *epoch of the ellipse*, from which we may derive phonetically the better-known word - *Apocalypse*. Regarding the length of these four Ages, there are numerous theories.¹³ And research by climatologists and others in recent years tends to support this ancient view of cyclic time.¹⁴

These strange capital As also signify *Ande*, a word we have already derived from Hendaye. In ancient times this name was applied to both the South American Andes and to the Himalayan massif. In both these regions, the one below and the other above the equator, there are numerous legends of secret

¹³ See A. Woldben: *After Nostradamus*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1973; Mayflower Books Ltd., 1975.)

¹⁴ John Gribbin: *The Climatic Threat* (Fontana/Collins.)

treasuries and libraries deep within the mountains. Of refuges in which mankind sheltered from a world disaster. The actual form of each A in the motif suggests this being in the form of a mountain with a large internal chamber just beneath its summit. This consideration alone can justify such a distinctive and unique form.

In the Gospel of St. Mark, Chapter 13, verse 14, Jesus says: 'But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand), then let them that be in Judea flee to the mountains.'

Here then is a clear directive to flee to the mountains. The fact that Christ was speaking in Judea at the time and to a simple people is perhaps sufficient reason for Him making mention of that particular country. However, we shall see later another reason why Judea might have been singled out in that way.

So, the *Horseman* comes and goes and the whole of the Inner Solar System bears witness to His visitations. Traditionally, He encounters our own planet in alternate hemispheres, that being the reason for alternate *refuges* in the high mountains above and below the equator. Timing His return is quite another matter. Perhaps the best guide we have comes from the early years of the Christian era. It was then prophesied that the End would come in '... a thousand and not another thousand.'¹⁵ So, Fulcanelli may have been correct when he wrote: '... there is not much time left.'

Our first turn around the monument is now complete and we have derived from the pedestal a consistent set of meanings. These are astronomical in character and interstellar in scale. We have also perceived a possible clue regarding our earliest origins and a reason for humankind having left the home star and its worlds; the fabulous means by which that epic journey was made and the nature of the beast that since those remote millennia has continued to dog our footsteps. Not bad for one short stroll around a little cenotaph!

Let us circle it again, but this time confining our interrogation to events nearer home - Sol and the Inner Solar system.

¹⁵ Woldben, op cit.

Our thinking must now become *interplanetary* rather than interstellar.

Once again we contemplate the great Star of panel 1, but as a companion of the Sun (3) and brightest of its planets as seen in our terrestrial skies. This is then Venus - Hesperus and Phosphorus, the evening and morning star of the Greeks. As we face the symbolical Jesus *above* that Star, we may remember His words from the Book of Revelation in the New Testament: 'I am the root and offspring of David, and the bright and morning star!' In which case, the secret meaning of the Title above them *both* will apply both to Earth and the *morning star*. Venus renewed in fire? What can this mean? We can recall the legends of Venus possessing a fiery cometary nature and the probability that it has changed its orbit around the Sun.¹⁶ Let us pause briefly and consider this.

In the 14th Chapter of Isaiah the prophet makes one of the most haunting references found in Holy Writ. He speaks of Lucifer and refers to Him as a *man*. Not a god, an angel, or a planet, but a man. A supremely powerful man who exalted Himself, and presumably His people and His world, above the *clouds of heaven* and attempted, as Isaiah put it, 'to exalt thy throne above the stars of God.' Now, discounting mere rhetoric, 'above the clouds of heaven' and 'above the stars of God' can only refer to a planet - astronomically, and in our chosen context. A throne that is not Lucifer Himself but His domain. The planetary domain of Jehovah - Iove - Jove - Zeus of the Greeks - Jupiter of the Romans - father of all the (planetary) gods. Thus, Lucifer's world seemed to outshine *Jupiter* which, after Venus, is the brightest planet in our skies.

This planet of Lucifer's, this light-bearer, shining with a strange and unnatural brilliance that heralded its own fall, its own destruction and that of lands and cities on Earth - according to Isaiah. Lucifer's world brought *down* to 'the sides of the pit' - 'of Hell.' This striking description can hardly be bettered of a planet spiralling down the exponentially steeping slope of the colossal gravitational pit of the Sun. The world of Lucifer - planet with a fiery tail, burnt out and temporarily

¹⁶ I. Velikovsky: *Worlds In Collision* (Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1950; Abacus/Sphere Books Ltd., 1974.)

lifeless. The hot and inhospitable Venus in its new imposed orbit of today? Now circling the very 'sides of the pit' at the bottom of which are the fires of Hell - atomic, all-consuming fires.

Did Lucifer and His people destroy their own habitat or was the crust of their planet blasted into space by one of the encounters with the *Horseman*? Either way, the whole Inner Solar system would have been tremendously disturbed. Mankind would have remembered the events. The arrival of the Moon in the vicinity of Earth may have occurred at that epoch - an event that would not have been the least of those disturbances.

Standing now before the motif of panel 2, we confirm our earlier interpretation of the symbol as an *Ark*. The fact that it is placed between the morning star and the Sun - motifs 1 and 3 - indicates this sunward journey. The face points in its direction of motion. There need be no dichotomy between this and the previous role we have assigned to it. We have but to allow the possibility that the Sirian emigrés first settled Lucifer's planet from their Ark which they parked about it. Later, just prior to the catastrophe to that world, they employed it once again to transport the bulk of their survivors here. Fantastic? Of course it is fantastic! So is alchemy! So is the whole cameo of cyclic catastrophe! Everything about we men is fantastic, especially in our abysmal ignorance concerning who we really are and of our own far past. That is why it is necessary to probe these problems in this clumsy way in the hope that *some* of our conclusions will be close to the truth. No one has yet written a *Short History of the Solar System* to which we might refer.

Turning again to the pedestal, let us re-examine motif 3. In our chosen interplanetary context it is brimful of meaning. Like the illustrious Flamel's comment upon the book of Abraham the Jew, we will say of it, 'to the very points and pricks thereof.'

It lies beneath the Inscription on the side opposite to the Title. This then is the other side of the coin of renewing fire becoming its *destructive* aspect or agent. Here that agent is Sol itself. A very angry Sol, associated with four lesser stars ... or *planets*. Sol with a *face*. Sol with *long* and *short* flames *bounded*

by pairs of concentric circles. The frightening picture of a star that varies its heat and light between definite limits while displaying great activity upon its face, or disc. A slightly *variable star*. Gribbin and Plagemann have demonstrated the reality of planetary influence upon the Sun's output over periods of some 179 years.¹⁷ In Gribbin's earlier writing, he discussed the climatological evidence for several much longer effects, *some* of which might arise solely out of the Sun's inherent variability.¹⁸

Our square of stars might, therefore, represent or suggest solar activity associated with a geometrical or *astrological* arrangement of four Inner planets with respect to Sol, or rather, its interior plasma of 'Hell Fire.' The double set of concentric circles or orbits would then indicate the involvement of *two outer* and *two inner* solar planets. The solar ecosphere, that band between the temperatures of fire and ice, would then vary its narrow annulus between them.

From man's point of view, caught in the jaws of his change, a change that may be extremely rapid as the Sun's atomic furnace shifts its balance, he might require an alternative home world - every 12,000 years or so? In that event, it is small wonder that those responsible for colonising Earth may have felt, and continue to feel, a certain responsibility towards us. We ordinary, unilluminated humankind.

Upon this basis, we might allow that, at a particular epoch, it was possible for Lucifer's planet, then swimming in the circle of the Asteroid belt, to have received from Sol sufficient heat and light to permit men to inhabit it - given certain other essentials. The retention of the Moon as Ark nearby, in an orbit about that planet, would also make sense. They would have surely known that the time would come when man must move sunwards if he were to survive.

The face of the Hendaye Sun motif on panel 3 underlines this picture. An increasing number of sunspots, some of colossal size, invariably accompany periods of increased solar activity. It is conceivable therefore that, at certain times,

¹⁷ John Gribbin & Stephen Plagemann: *The Jupiter Effect* (The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1974; Fontana, 1977.)

¹⁸ Gribbin, *op cit*.

huge spots conjoin to form a vast funnel or *mouth* out of which (as Fulcanelli has said) 'The Sun spews forth fire and brimstone upon macrocosmic creation.'

A slowly rotating Sun jetting out an arc of stellar fire is hinted at in the Eden story - 'An angel with a flaming sword turning [or twisting] this way and that.' Eden - Lucifer's planet-cum-Venus, or a world of Sirius B? Who can tell? But it may have happened in that way and more than once to the stars that man has known. Remember, our own star must be of a certain narrow type, and types of stars, like types of people, tend to behave identically, in the end.

A fanciful speculation? Perhaps. But Sirius B became a White Dwarf star only after it had passed through a comparatively brief phase following the nova outburst in which a great deal of its stellar atmosphere was blasted into space. What was left was a rapidly shrinking star at the centre of a red-lit nebula that would have tinted the whole Sirian system red, as seen from outside that multiple star system. It is of considerable interest to us, therefore, that the old Greeks always reported Sirius as a *red* star. Today it shines with almost unrivalled whiteness.

That red-lit nebulosity was the last traces of the shell of hot gases expanding outwards from the star. It was a dispersion witnessed during *historical times*, implying that the death of Sirius B was a recent phenomenon - perhaps as little as two million years. This is a timescale comparable with that enumerated in the Brahminical records which might be re-read with the foregoing thoughts in mind.

Sirius B possessed a mass almost identical to that of Sol and it might have been a closely similar stellar type. They may share a common birth out of the same interstellar material and, eventually, a common fate? They would be of comparable age, but with Sirius B subjected to greater disturbances within a multiple star system and subsequently prone to an earlier change. The variabilities we have mentioned may well be a feature of the long prelude to that change. So an astronomer might reason in one of his more private and speculative moments.

It might be fitting, therefore, to intrude these stellar considerations into the essentially solar interrogation. Then the

same motif of panel 3 symbolises the one star-death and the period precluding another, both of which are known to man. This solar backdrop to our present situation may underlie much that remains mysterious in such writings as *Revelation*, where a 'final dissolution of all things' is mentioned. It may also throw a little light upon the many strange reports of outworld intelligences taking an on-going interest in our rather sordid affairs. We simply lack the data to know.

Standing now before the circled cross of panel 4, we see it set between Sol (3) and the planet of Lucifer (1), thus straddling the ecological zone of the solar system. As before, its capital As inform us that this is a path, or orbit, associated with the time of cyclic catastrophe. In this case, it is an *interplanetary path* associated with these two worlds. However, in the present epoch, there is no comparable planet in the old orbit of Lucifer - only asteroidal debris. Only one world, Mars, shares that ecosphere with Earth now. If then mankind must once again move across this region of interplanetary space, he can only visit Mars in the hope that there will be found a place somewhat more agreeable than a devastated Earth. Mars is definitely not habitable to man at the present time. However, the solar constant has only to rise by a factor of about two to make it so - thermally. Mars would be just right for man and Earth too hot. This *factor of two* may well be symbolised on the third panel by the *full and half-length* flames of Sol. Such is the constructive side to motif 4. Its wholly destructive aspects probably relate to the orbits of debris of the Asteroid belt moving sunwards under the forces arising from the planetary alignments already discussed. The truth may lie with a combination of three destructive agencies, Sol and bolides, at the appropriate epochs.

There is one final reason for mentioning Mars. This ancient symbol of the circled cross has its two essential components integrated into the symbols of each of the other three Inner planets. Earth as ☉, Venus as ♀, and Mercury as ☿. Mars has only the circular component ☉. However, these two components of circle and cross in their enclosed form ⊕, almost exactly reproduce one of the most striking and unique features of the solar system - the great depression on the Martian surface known as Hellas. Chiliastically, these symbols

are particularly appropriate, since all four planets have undoubtedly been subjected to massive bombardment from space. In this context, we can add the symbol of Jupiter, ♃, or four, integral to the sign of the four Ages which, like the planet itself, is a fundamental factor in the destructive manifestations.

With tongue very much in cheek, let us ask ourselves the question: Is the place of refuge on Earth and has it always been on Earth? If X marks the spot, in the foregoing symbols, the interesting notion arises that the Martian form is an *enclosed* form of community, rather than being *upon* the surface as on Earth, or perhaps *beneath* the surface, as on Venus. Let us not take this too seriously, but merely note that it arises out of the symbolic forms.

We have now completed our interpretation of the pedestal and can attend to the signs and inscriptions on the cross itself. The first of these is a pair of Xs, one above the other and embossed upon the shaft immediately above the Inscription. This strange sign is the uppermost, or *most important* of all the statements. Separated by a horizontal line, each X is a mirror-image of the other, thus stating symbolically:

As above, so below.

This is none other than the first axiom of the Emerald Tablet of Hermes Trismegistos and the veritable starting point of the Great Work. It dominates the monument but, more directly, the Inscription beneath for which it provides a Khi or Key. Fulcanelli has already equated the Greek Khi or X with S. It may be written in the following form:

$$\frac{X}{X} = \text{a S above, so below} = \frac{S}{S}$$

Of the possible variants of this key, we employ one:

a S above, thus below

When the Inscription

OCRUXAVES
PESUNICA

becomes

OCRUXAVE
PESUNICAS

yielding the Latin anagram

ORCUS AVE
PUS E CANIS

i.e., *Orcus Ave Pus ē Canis*, which in English reads: *Lord of the Dead, Hail, down from Dog.*

Since Orcus is Pluto, or Osiris, we may write: *Lord of Sirius, Hail down from Dog.* Alternatively, we may prefer to retain the symbolic form of O CRUX = ⊕. Our readings then become:

Cyclic Destruction, Hail, down from Dog

and

Lord of Sirius, Hail, down from Dog.

This is plain enough.

In passing, it is amusing to note the old cant for a veritable deluge – ‘Raining (or hailing) Cats and Dogs.’ No doubt a phonetic play upon the Latin and English words in the above derivations.

The Inscription thus confirms our general interpretation of the pedestal motifs. It goes somewhat further and suggests a place name that can only be associated with the scene of the expected disaster. *Ha'il* is a town in Arabia some 200 miles north-north-east of Medina. Now, when Fulcanelli wrote of Hendaye, he drew attention to the headland of Fuenterrabia. Both the sound-form and the anagram of this name suggest *fire in Arabia*. Any exoteric reading of *The Koran* certainly conveys the impression of a considerable preoccupation with Hell Fire and Apocalyptic destruction. Perhaps, in the light of Hendaye, it can be said that this singular concern is both intentional and justified?

In Jean-Julien Champagne's frontispiece to *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, the alchemist stands elevated and protected between the front paws of the Sphinx. He and Hu, his protector, stare silently at the eastern horizon towards ancient Petra. In their narrow cone of vision is little Judea to the north and Ha'il to the south. Between them, very far away, is the Ande of Asia – the mighty Himalaya. *Man* and *Hu-man* wait together for the return of *Horus-in-the-horizon*. For now, in

this Age, He will appear before them, rather than behind their backs in distant Puerto Rico. He will be dreadfully close and His destruction will be witnessed by the silent watchers. He will return to a land where cycles ago He left a trace – the three venerated stones of the *Kaaba*. But Man and Human alike regard the future, not the past.

Hu's protection is twofold. Firstly, He symbolises the protection of the *illuminated state*. Secondly, His gaze directs our attention towards one of the great *refuges* that men undoubtedly used during the Atlantean catastrophe. A refuge which, with others, may serve again? With these thoughts in mind, we note the similarity between the sound-forms of *Cat Man Hu* and *Katmandhu*, and the persistent legends of concealed entrances into the bowels of the mountains that are associated with that place.

There is little point in seeking a physical longevity unless a refuge is at hand. Aspiring alchemists – please note!

So, even in the event there is hope that a proportion of mankind will survive, the indications are that this survival will not ultimately be a matter of refuge in the mountains but of being in a definite country at the time, or very shortly afterwards. Our authority is again Fulcanelli. He translated the Inscription into *French*, then transposed it into the *langue diplomatique* by means of the *rules of diplomacy*. This language of the gods, of the birds, or of the diplomats, gave him its secret meaning – 'It is written, that life takes refuge in a single space.' He goes on to say that this space is a *territory* or country and that 'it is up to us to find it!'

Now it is inconceivable that the sage of Hendaye, who took such trouble to transmit more than one level of teaching in his little monument, should not have incorporated a means of naming that country. It is, perhaps, too obvious to suggest that Spain itself is that place. The alchemists were never that obvious. We must also recall Fulcanelli's warning that our hemisphere (northern) will soon be tried in fire. It is difficult to see how Spain could escape such a conflagration. So, the interrogation might continue since we have by no means exhausted this well of information even upon the restricted level of chiasm.

We complete our *tour de force* where we began – with the

name itself. *Hendaye*, in the Iberian peninsula is in *Druid-country*, land of the *Hendaka*.¹⁹

Therefore our sage was almost certainly deeply versed in things Druidical – that other great stream of teaching and praxis that emanated alongside the more familiar stream of Egypt from their common Atlantean source. We begin now to see why Fulcanelli said of this Man: 'He had a profound knowledge of the universe.'

Hendaye's little cenotaph casts a long shadow. It is the luminous shade of the stelar obelisk of ancient On, directing our attention and marking out the Sothic hours. Fulcanelli freely acknowledged his debt to the 'Brothers of Heliopolis' and to old Egypt, that nursery of our Age. Let us do the same and seal this book in a manner of which he might approve – with Chapter CX of *The Book of the Dead*, which is among the most beautiful and inspired of that many-sided writing.

The suppliant, speaking as Osiris Himself, is saying to Thoth:

'Set having seized hold on Horus when the Twin Eyes were building for the Garden of Rest, I separated Horus and Set; wherefore Set opened the paths of those Eyes in heaven.

'But the sweat of Set streamed out into the four winds, because of the soul of his Eye, which is the dweller in desire, that he might save it within the body of Horus, from the gods of the silence.

'Yet lo! I even I, have piloted this great ship into the pool of peace.

'*"I am"* is her builder in the Hall of the Light, which is the mansion of His stars of everlasting youth.

'And I have steered her in the waters of the Garden of Rest, that I may fetch unto her cities, that I may journey in unto the City of Peace passing onwards.

'For *"I am"* is my rest in His seasons; even He who when He manifests His plan, the Company of the Gods become His first born children.

'Even He who, when He gives rest to the twin warriors,

¹⁹ See Ithell Colquhoun: *Sword of Wisdom*, (Neville Spearman Ltd., 1975.)

who are wardens of the living ones of His creation, brings peace perfectly.

'Yea, He gives rest to the twin warriors, who are their wardens, because He mourns on account of their wars; yea, He crushes out the things that hinder the little ones; He places a limit to the hurtful power of the shining forms.

'I conquer in the Garden of Rest, for "I am" is He that knoweth Her; and I steer in Her pools that I may fetch to Her cities, for my uttered word is powerful.

'I am equipped against the shining forms that they prevail not over me. I have hedged about this thy Garden, O Peace! Even this thy Garden which Thou has loved of all Thy works, O lord of the four winds.

'And I am glorious therein; I reap therein; I move therein; I am wedded therein; my utterance is powerful therein.

'I make no choice therein, yet I have power therein, for the fang of Thy mouth is a wand of power, O Peace! Reiteration is its name; it is established above the pillars of the Light; it is held apart from the pleasures of the common day, the fraction of the years.

'It is the hidden one of the mouth; it is the silence of His mouth whose uttered word is mystery, even the mouth of the Ruler of the Aeon which grasps the eternity of "Being in Peace"; who is Lord of the Peace of Horus when He sets Him in motion as a Hawk of magnificent vastness; and thousands of years of life are furnished forth from Him.

'He goes and he comes according to his pleasure, but the throne of his heart is in the pools and the cities of the Garden of Rest; for he is begotten in the birth-chamber of the Divine City, and his rest shall come in the consuming of the Divine City. He it is who fashions Her likeness and unites Her to all that belongs to the chamber of birth in the City of God.

'And if one shall rest in life as a crystal; he shall do all things in the Garden of Rest, after the manner of that which is done in the pool of the Twin Flames. There is no shout of joy in Her, only Peace moving and returning; for this Garden is united to all those things which belong to the birth-chamber of the Divine City.

'Yea, if a man shall rest in life as a crystal, he shall do all

things in Her in like manner as they are done in the pool of the Twin Flames ...

'... I have moved against the earth; I have caused my inherited fate to rest; I have come forth; I have given what I have given; I have made bliss; I have taken my power that I might set in order peace.

'O "Being of Peace"! I have come into Thee; my soul follows after me; power is upon my hands; and the Lady of the two Earths is the establishment of my utterance.

'I have remembered in Her what I had forgotten; and I, even I, live and am not hurt to my destruction ...

'O white grain and red grain, of the land of God! I have come into Thee; I have striven, and I have borne my burden, following first the purity of the Company of the Gods, and the mooring-post is fixed for me in the Pool of the Zenith, the mooring-post is set up for me.

'I have recited the words aloud; I have ascribed praise to the Gods who dwell in the Garden of Rest.'

APPENDIX I

An Alchemical Recipe

One of Michael Scot's alchemical formulae, given in his work, *De Alchemia*, reads as follows:

'Medibibaz the Saracen of Africa used to change lead into gold (in the following manner). Take lead and melt it thrice with caustic ('comburenti'), red arsenic, sublimate of vitriol, sugar of alum, and with that red tuchia of India which is found on the shore of the Red Sea, and let the whole be again and again quenched in the juice of the *Portulaca marina*, the wild cucumber, a solution of sal ammoniac, and the urine of a young badger. Let all these ingredients then, when well mixed, be set on the fire, with the addition of some common salt, and well boiled until they be reduced to one-third of their original bulk, when you must proceed to distil them with care. Then take the marchasite of gold, prepared talc, roots of coral, some carcha-root, which is an herb very like the *Portulaca marina*; alum of cumae something red and saltish, Roman alum and vitriol, and let the latter be made red; sugar of alum, Cyprus earth, some of the red Barbary earth, for that gives a good colour; Cumaeen earth of the red sort, African tuchia, which is a stone of variegated colours, and being melted with copper changeth it into gold; Cumaeen salt which is ...; pure red arsenic, the blood of a ruddy man, red tartar, *gumma* of Barbary, which is red and worketh wonders in this art; salt of Sardinia which is like ... Let all these be beaten together in a brazen mortar, then sifted finely and made into a paste with the above water. Dry this paste, and again rub it fine on the marble slab. Then take the lead you have prepared as directed above, and melt it together with the powder, adding some red alum and some

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more of the various salts. This alum is found about Aleppo ('Alaphia'), and in Armenia, and will give your metal a good colour. When you have so done you shall see the lead changed into the finest gold, as good as what comes from Arabia. This have I, Michael Scot, often put to the proof and ever found to be true.'

Author's note: The above is quoted merely as an example, to show that Scot did experiment in practical alchemy. Its actual contents are by no means offered - or recommended - as an ideal system of the praxis.

APPENDIX II

Nicholas Flamel's Testimony

(Versions of Flamel's first-person story differ marginally; c.f. those of Waite, in *Alchemists Through The Ages*, Cockren's version in *Alchemy Rediscovered and Restored*, and Sadoul's summary in *Alchemists & Gold*. The following version appears to be the most authentic and is a translation into English in 1624 by Eirenaeus Orandus: *Nicholas Flamel, His Exposition of the Hieroglyphicall Figures, which he caused to be painted upon an arch in St. Innocent's Churchyard in Paris.*)

Although that I Nicholas Flamel, Notary, and abiding in Paris, in this year one thousand three hundred fourscore and nineteen, and dwelling in my house in the street of Notaries, near unto the chapel of St. James of the Boucherie; although, I say, that I learned but a little Latin, because of the small means of my parents, which nevertheless were by them that envie me most, accounted honest people; yet by the grace of God, and the intercession of the blessed Saints in Paradise of both sexes, and principally of Saint James of Gallicia, I have not wanted the understanding of the Books of the Philosophers, and in them learned their so hidden secrets. And for this cause there shall never be any moment of my life, when I remember this high good, wherein upon my knees (if the place will give me leave) or otherwise, in my heart with all my affection, I shall not render thanks to this most benign God, which never suffereth the child of the Just to beg from door to door, and deceiveth not them which wholly trust in his blessing.

Whilst therefore, I Nicholas Flamel, Notary, after the decease of my parents, got my living in our art of writing, by making inventories, dressing accounts, and summing up the

APPENDIX II

expenses of tutors and pupils, there fell into my hands, for the sum of two florins, a gilded book, very old and large. It was not of paper or parchment, as other books be, but was only made of delicate rinds (as it seemed to me) of tender young trees. The cover of it was brass, well bound, all engraven with letters or strange figures; and for my part, I think they might well be Greek characters, or some such like ancient language. Sure I am that I could not read them, and I know well they were not notes nor letters of the Latin, nor of the Gaul, for of them we understand a little. As for that which was within it, the leaves of bark or rind were engraven, and with admirable diligence written, with a point of iron, in fair and neat Latin letters coloured.

It contained thrice seven leaves, for so they were counted in the top of the leaves, and always every seventh leaf was without any writing, but instead thereof, there was painted a Virgin, and serpents swallowing her up; in the second seventh, a Cross whereon a serpent was crucified; and in the last seventh, there were painted deserts or wildernesses in the midst whereof ran many fair fountains, from whence there issued out a number of serpents, which ran up and down here and there. Upon the first of the leaves, was written in great capital letters of gold ABRAHAM THE JEW, PRINCE, PRIEST, LEVITE, ASTROLOGER, AND PHILOSOPHER, TO THE NATION OF THE JEWS, BY THE WRATH OF GOD DISPERSED AMONG THE GAULS, SENDETH HEALTH. After this it was filled with great execrations and curses (with this word, MARANATHA, which was often repeated there) against every person that should cast his eyes upon it, if he were not Sacrificer or Scribe.

He that sold me this book, knew not what it was worth, no more than I when I bought it; I believe it had been stolen or taken from the miserable Jews; or found hid in some part of the ancient place of their abode. Within the book, in the second leaf, he comforted his Nation counselling them to fly vices, and above all idolatry, attending with sweet patience the coming of the Messiah, which should vanquish all the Kings of the Earth, and should reign with his people in glory eternally. Without doubt this had been some very wise and understanding man. In the third leaf, and in all the other writings that followed, to help his captive nation to pay their tributes unto the Roman

emperors, and to do other things, which I will not speak of, he taught them in common words the transmutation of metals.

He painted the vessels by the sides and he advertised them of the colours, and of all the rest, saving of the *prima materia*, or prime agent, of the which he spake not a word but only (as he said) in the fourth and fifth leaves entire he painted it, and figured it with very great cunning and workmanship, for although it was well and intelligibly figured and painted, yet no man could ever have been able to understand it, without being well skilled in their Cabala, which goeth by tradition, and without having well studied their books. The fourth and fifth leaf therefore, was without any writing, all full of fair figures illustrated, or as it were illuminated, for the work was very exquisite.

First he painted a young man, with wings at his ankles, having in his hand a Caducean rod, writhen about with two Serpents, wherewith he struck upon a helmet which covered his head. He seemed to my small judgement to be the God Mercury of the Pagans. Against him there came running and flying with open wings a great old man, who upon his head had an hour-glass fastened, and in his hands a hook (or scythe) like Death, with the which in terrible and furious manner, he would have cut off the feet of Mercury. On the other side of the fourth leaf, he painted a fair flower on the top of a very high mountain, which was sore shaken with the north wind; it had the foot blue, the flowers white and red, the leaves shining like fine gold, and round about it the dragons and griffons of the North made their nests and abode. On the fifth leaf there was a fair Rose tree flowered in the midst of a sweet garden, climbing up against a hollow oak, at the foot whereof boiled a fountain of most white water, which ran headlong down into the depths, notwithstanding it first passed among the hands of infinite people which digged in the earth seeking for it, but because they were blind, none of them knew it, except here and there one which considered the weight.

On the last side of the fifth leaf, there was a King with a great falchion (a borad, curved, convex-edged sword - author's note), who made to be killed in his presence by some soldiers a great falchion (a broad, curved, convex-edged sword - author's of the unpitiful soldiers; the blood of which infants was

afterwards by other soldiers gathered up, and put in a great vessel, wherein the Sun and Moon came to bathe themselves. And because that his history did represent the more part of that of the Innocents slain by Herod, and that in this book I learned the greatest part of the Art, this was one of the Causes, why I placed in their Churchyard these Hieroglyphic symbols of this secret science. And thus you see that which was in the first five leaves.

I will not represent unto you that which was written in good and intelligible Latin in all the other written leaves, for God would punish me, because I should commit a greater wickedness than he who (as it is said) wished that all the men of the world had but one head that he might cut it off at one blow. Having with me therefore this fair book, I did nothing else day nor night, but study upon it, understanding very well all the operations that it shewed, but not knowing with what matter I should begin, which made me very heavy and solitary, and caused me to fetch many a sigh. My wife, Perrenelle, whom I loved as myself and had lately married, was much astonished at this, comforting me and earnestly demanding, if she could by any means deliver me from this trouble. I could not possibly hold my tongue but told her all, and showed her this fair book, whereof at the same instant that she saw it, she became, as much enamoured as myself, taking extreme pleasure to behold the fair cover, gravings, images and portraits thereof, notwithstanding she understood as little as I, yet it was a great comfort to me to talk with her, and to entertain myself, what we should do to have the interpretation of them.

In the end I caused to be painted within my lodging, as naturally as I could, all the figures and portraits of the fourth and fifth leaf, which I showed to the greatest clerks in Paris, who understood thereof no more than myself. I told them they were found in a book that taught the philosopher's stone, but the greatest part of them made a mock both of me, and of that blessed stone, excepting one called Master Anselm, which was a Licentiate in Physic, and studied hard in this science. He had a great desire to have seen my book, and there was nothing in the world which he would not have done for a sight of it, but I always told him that I had it not; only I made him a large description of the method.

He told me that the first portrait represented Time, which devoured all; and that according to the number of the six written leaves, there was required the space of six years, to perfect the stone; and then, he said, we must turn the glass and seethe it no more. And when I told him this was not painted, but only to show and teach the first agent (as was said in the book) he answered me, that this decoction for six years' space was, as it were, a second agent, and that certainly the first agent, which was there painted, was that white and heavy water, which without doubt was argent vive, which they could not fix, nor cut off his feet, that is to say, take away his volatility, save by long decoction in the purest blood of young infants, for in that, this quicksilver being joined with gold and silver, was first turned into a herb like that which was there painted, and afterwards by corruption, into serpents; which serpents being then wholly dried, and decocted by fire, were reduced into a powder of gold, which should be the stone.

This was the cause that during the space of one and twenty years, I tried a thousand broileries, yet never with blood, for that was wicked and villainous; for I found in my book that the philosophers called blood, the mineral spirit, which is in the metals, principally in the Sun, Moon, and Mercury, to the assembling whereof, I always tended; yet these interpretations for the most part were more subtle than true. Not seeing therefore in my works the signs, at the time written in my book, I was always to begin again.

In the end having lost all hope of ever understanding those figures, for my last refuge, I made a vow to God, and St. James of Gallicia, to demand the interpretation of them of some Jewish priest, in some synagogue of Spain; whereupon, with the consent of Perrenelle, carrying with me the extract of the pictures, having taken the pilgrim's habit and staff, in the same fashion as you may see me, without this same arch in the churchyard, in which I put the hieroglyphical figures, where I have also set against the wall, on the one and the other side a procession, in which are represented by order all the colours of the stone, so as they come and go, with this writing in French:

Moult plaist a Dieu procession
S'elle est faicte en devotion:

that is,

Much pleaseth God procession
If't be done in devotion.

'which is as it were the beginning of King Hercules his Book, which entreateth of the colours of the stone, entitled *Iris* or the *Rainbow*, in these terms, *Operis processio multum naturae placet*, that is, *The procession of the work is very pleasant unto Nature*: the which I have put there expressly for the great Clerks who shall understand the allusion.

In this same fashion, I say, I put myself upon my way and so much I did, that I arrived at Montjoy; and afterwards at Saint James, where with great devotion I accomplished my vow. This done, in Leon at my return I met with a merchant of Boulogne, which made me known to a physician, a Jew by nation, and as then a Christian, dwelling in Leon aforesaid, who was very skilful in sublime sciences, called Master Canches.

As soon as I had shown him the figures of my extract, he being ravished with great astonishment and joy demanded of me incontinently if I could tell him any news of the book, from whence they were drawn? I answered him in Latin (wherein he asked me the question) that I hoped to have some good news of the book, if anybody could decipher unto me the enigmas. All at that instant transported with great ardour and joy, he began to decipher unto me the beginning. But to be short he (being) well content to learn news where this book should be, and I to hear him speak – and certainly he had heard much discourse of the book, but (as he said) as of a thing which was believed to be utterly lost – we resolved of our voyage, and from Leon we passed to Oviedo, and from thence to Sanson, where we put ourselves to sea to come into France.

Our voyage had been fortunate enough, and already, since we were entered into this kingdom, he had most truly interpreted unto me the great part of my figures, where, even unto the very points and pricks, he found great mysteries, which seemed unto me wonderful. When arriving at Orleans, this learned man fell extremely sick, being afflicted with excessive vomitings, which remained still with him of those he had suffered at sea, and he was in such a continual fear of my

forsaking him, that he could imagine nothing like unto it. And although I was always by his side, yet would he incessantly call for me, but in sum he died, at the end of the seventh day of his sickness, by reason whereof I was much grieved, yet as well as I could, I caused him to be buried in the Church of the Holy Cross at Orleans, where he yet resteth; God have his soul, for he died a good Christian. And surely if I be not hindered by death I will give unto that Church some revenue, to cause some Masses to be said for his soul every day.

He that would see the manner of my arrival, and the joy of Perrenelle, let him look upon us two in this city of Paris, upon the door of the Chapel of St. James of the Boucherie, close by the one side of my house, where we are both painted, myself giving thanks at the feet of St. John, whom she had so often called upon. So it was, that by the grace of God and the intercession of the happy and holy Virgin and the blessed Saints James and John, I knew all that I desired, that is to say, the first principles, yet not their first preparation, which is a thing most difficult, above all the things in the world. But in the end I had that also after long errors of three years, or thereabouts, during which time, I did nothing but study and labour, so as you may see me without this Arch, where I have placed my processions against the two pillars of it, under the feet of St. James and St. John, praying always to God, with my beads in my hand, reading attentively within a book, and weighing the words of the philosophers, and afterwards trying and proving the diverse operations which I imagined to myself, by their only words.

Finally I found that which I desired, which I also soon knew by the strong scent and odour thereof. Having this, I easily accomplished the mastery, for knowing the preparation of the first agents, and after following my book according to the letter I could not have missed it, though I would. Then the first time that I made projection was upon mercury whereof I turned half a pound, or thereabouts, unto pure silver, better than that of the mine, as I myself assayed, and made others assay many times. This was upon a Monday, the 17th of January, about noon, in my house, Perrenelle only being present, in the year of the restoring of mankind, 1382.

And afterwards, following always my book, from word to

word, I made projection of the red stone upon the like quantity of mercury, in the presence likewise of Perrenelle only, in the same house the five and twentieth day of April following, the same year, about five o'clock in the evening, which I transmuted truly into almost as much pure gold, better assuredly than common gold, more soft and pliable. I may speak it with truth, I have made it three times, with the help of Perrenelle, who understood it as well as I because she helped me with my operations. I was afraid for a long time, that Perrenelle could not hide the extreme joy of her felicity, which I measure by my own, and lest she should let fall some word amongst her kindred, of the great treasures which we possessed, for extreme joy takes away the understanding as well as great heaviness, but the goodness of the most great God had not only filled me with this blessing, to give me a wife chaste and sage (for she was moreover not only capable of reason, but also to do all that was reasonable), and more discreet and secret than ordinarily other women are. Above all, she was exceedingly devout, and therefore seeing her self without hope of children, and now well stricken in years, she began, as I did, to think of God and to give ourselves to the works of mercy.

At that time when I wrote this Commentary in the year one thousand four hundred and thirteen, in the end of the year, after the decease of my faithful companion which I shall lament all the days of my life, she and I had already founded and endowed with revenues fourteen hospitals in this City of Paris, we had new built from the ground three chapels, we had enriched with great gifts and good rents, seven churches, with many reparations in their churchyards, besides that which we have done at Boulogne, which is not much less than we have done here. I will not speak of the good which both of us have done to particular poor folks, principally to widows and poor orphans, whose names if I should tell and how I did it, besides that my reward should be given me in this world, I should likewise do displeasure to those good persons, whom I pray God Bless, which I would not do for anything in the world.

Building therefore these churches, churchyards, and hospitals in this City, I resolved myself to cause to be painted in the fourth Arch of the Churchyard of the Innocents, as you enter by the great gate in St. Dennis Street and taking the way on

the right hand, the most true and essential marks of the Art, yet under veils and hieroglyphical covertures, in imitation of those which are in the gilded book of Abraham the Jew, which may represent two things, according to the understanding and capacity of them that behold them.

First, the mysteries of our future and undoubted Resurrection, at the day of Judgement and coming of good Jesus (whom may it please to have mercy upon us) a history which is well agreeing to a churchyard. And secondly they may signify to them which are skilled in Natural Philosophy, all the principal and necessary operations of the mastery. These hieroglyphic figures shall serve as two ways to lead into the heavenly life; the first and most open sense teaching the sacred mysteries of our salvation; (as I will show hereafter) the other teaching every man that hath any small understanding in the stone, the linear way of the work, which being perfected by any one, the change of evil into good, takes away from him the root of all sin, (which is covetousness) making him likeable, gentle, pious, religious, and fearing God, how evil soever he was before. For from thence forward he is continually ravished with the great grace and mercy which he hath obtained from God, and with the profoundness of his Divine and admirable works.

These are the reasons that have moved me to set these forms in this fashion, and in this place, which is a churchyard, to the end that if any man obtains this inestimable good to conquer this rich golden fleece, he may think with himself (as I did) not to keep the talent of God digged in the earth, buying lands and possessions which are the vanities of this world, but rather to work charitably towards his brethren, remembering himself that he learned his secret among the bones of the dead, in whose number he shall shortly be found and that after this life he must render an account, before a just and redoubtable Judge, which will censure even to an idle and vain word.

Let him therefore, which having well weighed my words, and well known and understood my figures, hath first gotten elsewhere the knowledge of the first beginnings and agents, (for certainly in these figures and commentaries, he shall not find any step or information thereof) perfect to the glory of God the mastery of Hermes; remembering himself of the Church

Catholic Apostolic and Roman; and of all other churches, churchyards and hospitals, and above all the Church of the Innocents in this City (in the churchyard whereof he shall have contemplated these true demonstrations), opening bounteously his purse to them that are secretly poor honest people, desolate weak women, widows and forlorn orphans. So be it.

Glossary

ABLUTION: the process of washing a solid with liquid, usually water.
 ADEPT: a successful alchemist, i.e., one who has perfected the Philosopher's Stone.
 ALCHEMIST: one who seeks the Philosopher's Stone.
 ALEMBIC: the upper part, or head, of a still; also known as *limbeck*, or *helm*, through its similar shape to a helmet. Alembic is often incorrectly used to denote an entire still. (See *cucurbite*.)
 ALKAHEST: the Universal Solvent; coined by Paracelsus.
 ALUDEL: an earthenware bottle, pear-shaped and open at both ends; used as a condenser in *sublimation*.
 ANDROGYNE: *prima materia* containing 'male' and 'female' elements; a dual-natured salt or the Secret Fire; also, the 'hermaphrodite', symbolic of the completed Work and of its result - the 'Perfected Being,' or Adept. See also *rebis*.
 AQUA REGIA: nitric acid (*aqua fortis*) and hydrochloric acid (*spiritus salis*) combined; so called because of its solvent action on gold. It was known to the Arab alchemists and Glauber prepared it by distilling common salt with nitric acid.
 AQUA VITAE: aqueous alcohol concentrated by one or more distillations.
 ARGENT-VIVE: mercury or quicksilver; silver in a 'quick' or mobile state.
 ARSENIC: in pre-16th-century texts, 'philosophers salt.'
 ATHANOR: a furnace, sometimes regarded as an incubator, as in references to 'gentle' heat or the 'House of the Chick.'
 BALNEO: bath, of water, sand, ashes, etc., which can be heated.
 BATH OF THE KING: liquid composed of 'virgin's milk' and 'philosophic mercury' in which the *prima materia* is bathed at the *rebis* stage.
 BLACK DRAGON: symbol of the *nigredo* stage of the Work; death, decay, putrefaction.
 BOLT-HEAD: a round-bottomed, long-necked flask, also called a *matrass*.

GLOSSARY

BRIMSTONE: sulphur.
 CALX VIVE: quicklime.
 CERATION: the softening of hard material to reduce it to a waxy or fluid state.
 CHAOS: *prima materia* in its raw state, when first obtained.
 CINNABAR: sulphide of mercury.
 COCTION: cooking.
 COHOBATION: pouring back a distillate from its residue or 'faeces,' followed by redistillation.
 COMPOST: the mixture in the Philosophic Egg, or round, glass vessel.
 CROSET: crucible.
 CUCURBITE: the lower section of a still, made of earthenware or glass; sometimes known as a gourd.
 CUPEL: a small, shallow cup or dish of porous or infusible material.
 CUPELLATION: heating in a *cupel* in a current of air, as in gold and silver refining.
 DEWS OF MAY: dew gathered during March and April for use in May.
 DRAGON: normally 'philosopher's sulphur', but also used with other descriptive colours to denote different substances and stages of the Work.
 DRY WATER: the Secret Fire, or 'philosophic mercury.'
 EAGLE: symbol of sublimation.
 EARTH: generally any solid matter; but 'our earth' is *prima materia*.
 EGG: usually the *philosophic egg* or glass vessel containing the philosophic substances for the final coction.
 ELIXIR: the Elixir of Life, obtained from the Philosopher's Stone in powdered form; also a liquid oil derived from metals or vegetables for therapeutic use in homoeopathic dosage.
 FIRE: the principle of heat in matter.
 FIXATION: the process of fixing the volatile, i.e., depriving a substance of a volatile nature.
 GOLD: common gold, but also alchemical gold, i.e., any metal which has been transmuted; Philosophic Gold usually indicates *prima materia* or one of its components, or occasionally indicates 'sulphur' in the *prima materia*. *Aurum potabile* is drinkable gold in a tincture for therapeutic use.
 GREAT WORK: the entire praxis from start to finish; also used in magic and mysticism to denote the consummation of a great spiritual and philosophical search.
 GREEN LION: the stem and root of the radical essence of metals.
 GRIPE'S EGG: the Griffin's Egg - another allusion to the egg-shaped vessel; the Griffin, half-lion, half-eagle, symbolizes the conjunction of the fixed and volatile principles of the two-fold or dual-natured mercurial matter.
 HELM: alembic.

HERMAPHRODITE: androgyne.
 HERMETIC: of the work of Hermes (Trismegistos); also used to indicate tightly sealed.
 JUPITER: iin.
 KERMES: a variety of oak (*quercus coccifera*) which in alchemy denotes kermesite (*antimony oxysulphide*), which is akin to stibium (antimony.)
 KING: analogous to Gold and the Sun (Sol) and Sulphur; the Red King signifies the *rubedo*, or reddening stage of revivification.
 LUNA PHILOSOPHORUM: Philosopher's silver: the pure, living alchemical spirit of silver - the refined essence of Heat and Moisture.
 LUNARA: the lunary or moonwort plant (*Botrychium lunara*), also known in alchemy as *Martagon*.
 LUTE: a cement used for sealing apertures and joints of laboratory equipment.
 MAGNESIA: a loose term denoting several mineral substances, including pyrites, magnetite, pyrolusite and, possibly, magnesia itself.
 MARKASITS: pyrites.
 MARTAGON: *lunara*.
 MARS: iron.
 MATRASS: bolt-head; a long-necked, round-bottomed flask.
 MERDS: excreta.
 MERCURY: mercury, quicksilver; 'our mercury' can mean almost anything from mercury in the *prima materia* to *philosophic mercury*, i.e., the salt extracted from the *prima materia* by the action of the Secret Fire. *Philosopher's mercury*, on the other hand, denotes the female principle in the *prima materia*.
 MIZERION: a plant, *Daphne mezereum*.
 MOON: silver; but when used in conjunction with 'Sun' may denote mercury, or one of the two principles in the *prima materia*.
 MULTIPLICATION: often used to mean transmutation, but can also denote a concentration of the potency of the Stone in the final stage of the Work, which requires the entire repetition of the process.
 NITRE: saltpetre (potassium nitrate.)
 OAK: the tree; one component of the Secret Fire is said to be extracted from its embers.
 ORPIMENT: arsenic tri-sulphide, a yellow mineral.
 OUROBOROS: the serpent biting its own tail; symbolic of infinity, eternity and the cyclic nature of the Great Work.
 PANACEA: universal medicine, to be obtained by the Stone.
 PELICAN: a pot-bellied, two-armed circulatory vessel for use in continuous distillation.
 PHILOSOPHERS' MERCURY: the female principle in the *prima materia*.
 PHILOSOPHERS' SALT: the means by which sulphur is united with Philosophers' mercury. (Sadoul notes that before Basil Valentine

and Paracelsus, this salt was often called arsenic or not mentioned at all.)
 PHILOSOPHERS' SULPHUR: the male principle in the *prima materia*.
 PHILOSOPHIC MERCURY: the salt extracted from the *prima materia* by the action of the Secret Fire.
 PRIMA MATERIA: prime matter, which the alchemist must discover before he can begin the Great Work. (See *The Praxis* chapter.)
 PROJECTION: transmutation, by applying a small amount of the Philosopher's Stone in powdered form, wrapped in wax or paper, to the molten metal to be transmuted.
 PYRITES: natural sulphide of iron.
 QUEEN: analogous to Silver and Luna. The White Queen signifies the *albedo*, or whitening stage.
 QUICKSILVER: mercury.
 QUINTESENCE: literally, fifth essence; a higher elemental state analogous to the occult notion of Ether or *Akasa* (See chapter, *The Ultimate Mystery*.); in alchemy, it may also denote the metallic principle after dissolution, the red or *rubedo* stage of the Work, or a red substance which appears after or during coction.
 REBIS: a dual-natured substance created by the first two stages or degrees of the Work; in the Third Degree, the *rebis* is cooked in the Philosophic Egg.
 REGIMEN: stage of temperature, one of seven applied to the Philosophic Egg during coction. The term was used by Philalethes.
 RETORT: vessel for distillation.
 SALTPETRE: potassium nitrate, NO₃K.
 SANDIFER: dross from molten glass, forming a scum.
 SATURN: lead.
 SECRET FIRE: a dual salt prepared by the alchemist; also known as the 'prime agent.' (See chapter, *The Praxis*.)
 SOL PHILOSOPHORUM: Philosopher's Gold; the pure, living alchemical spirit of Gold; the refined essence of Heat and Fire.
 SOLUTION: the process of dissolving a solid in a liquid.
 SOLVE ET COAGULA: a motto summarising the main processes of the Work at the beginning - dissolve and coagulate. The solids are dissolved and the volatile spirits fixed.
 SPAGYRICS: the preparation of medicines by alchemical processes.
 STIBNITE: native antimony tri-sulphide.
 SUBLIMATION: the transformation of a solid into vapour without an intermediate liquid stage, followed by condensation of the vapour as a solid on a cool surface.
 SUN: gold. But when used with the Moon, they denote sulphur and mercury conjoined, the two components of *prima materia*.
 TARTAR: cream of tartar is purified argol, the hard crust formed on the sides of wine casks.

THE FULCANELLI PHENOMENON

UNIVERSAL MEDICINE: the Philosopher's Stone powdered and diluted and taken medicinally in a tincture or oil, also known as the *panacea*. If the Work is taken only up to the *albedo*, or whitening stage, a less potent medicine is obtained.

UNIVERSAL SOLVENT: the *Alkahest*; the liquid solvent used in all three stages of the Work. It is not intended to denote a literal solvent of anything and everything, as sometimes assumed; otherwise, nothing could be found to contain it.

VENUS: copper.

VIRGIN'S MILK: a salt obtained through the action of the Dews of May. (See chapter, *The Praxis*.)

VITRIOL: literally, a glistening crystalline body, such as white vitriol (zinc sulphate), green vitriol (ferrous sulphate) and blue vitriol (copper sulphate); but alchemically, it can indicate the philosophic solvent (as in Valentine), or it is used as a cipher, its letters spelling out the initials of *Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem*. (Visit the interior of the earth and by rectifying you will find the hidden Stone.)

WATER: in alchemy, any liquid.

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