

Fulcanelli's Most Likely Identity
Parts I & II

by Christer Böke and John Koopmans



Introduction

The 20th century Master Alchemist, Fulcanelli, is well-known to the alchemical community through the two highly regarded books that bear his name: *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* (1926), and *Les Demeures Philosophales* (1930). Both these books, initially published in French by Jean Schemit, have since been translated into the English language. The actual identity of the intriguing, secretive man behind the name “Fulcanelli” has been very well protected by design or fate for 80 years by the very few close associates who knew him, since his first book was published in 1926.

Many theories have been put forward regarding the possible identity of Fulcanelli (see, for example *Fulcanelli Devoilé* by Genevière Dubois, *Fulcanelli: Sa véritable identité enfin révélée* by Patrick Riviere or *Al-Kemi: A Memoir* by André Vandembroeck). Some of the more popular possible candidates for Fulcanelli’s identity include Jean-Julian Champagne, René A. Schwaller de Lubicz, Pierre Dujols, Eugène Canseliet, or even a “committee” of three: Pierre Dujols, Jean-Julien Champagne, and Eugène Canseliet. No doubt, all three of these individuals were closely involved with the arrangements undertaken to publish Fulcanelli’s works, but Canseliet himself emphatically stated that Fulcanelli’s identity was not Champagne, Dujols, or himself, or a committee, but that of a single individual.



The object of this paper is not to critique the current theories regarding Fulcanelli’s identity, many of which are carefully developed, based specifically on the particular assumptions as selected and presented by the authors. Instead, based on a number of observations and clues derived from sources closest to Fulcanelli, we are putting forward an alternative theory which we feel stands alone, not only in addressing most of the clues, but especially one of the most important of all clues, one which has consistently been ignored by other researchers to date.

We begin by examining the various pieces of reliable information that are actually known about the man behind the name, Fulcanelli, followed by an examination of the year of his birth as well as the approximate year of his possible death or departure. From the preceding, we then develop a profile of characteristics that we feel must be used to narrow the choices in selecting a logical candidate for Fulcanelli’s identity. We then briefly demonstrate why the choices presented to date by others do not match this profile. Finally we present a possible candidate which we feel matches the profile almost exactly.

What Is Actually Known About Fulcanelli?

There is very little biographical information available regarding the characteristics of the enigmatic man, Fulcanelli, primarily because those who knew his identity vowed to protect it. This they carried out very faithfully. Most of the sparse information that is known comes from a reliable source, and from one of the few men who actually knew (and protected) his real identity, Eugene Canseliet (shown at left).



Eugene Canseliet (born December 18, 1899; died April 17, 1982) as a young teenager, first met Fulcanelli in 1915, and by 1920 he continued to meet with him quite frequently. Because of this comradeship and sense of trust, in 1923 Fulcanelli entrusted the young Canseliet with his personal sealed notes for three manuscripts (*Le Mystère des Cathédrales*; *Les Demeures Philosophales* and *Finis Gloria Mundi*), two of which formed the basis of the two books subsequently published under Fulcanelli's name (Fulcanelli specifically asked Canseliet not to publish the third manuscript). Canseliet was given the responsibility for the arrangements that would see the notes through to the final publication of the two books in 1926 and 1930. Canseliet's other mentor, the artist and practicing alchemist Jean-Julien Champagne (born 1877; died 1932; shown at right), was given the task of illustrating the two books. Canseliet wrote the Preface to both books as well as the Prefaces to subsequent editions of the books.

Some of the reliable information that we know about Fulcanelli comes from the Prefaces written by Canseliet, while other information comes from such other sources as various interviews that were later conducted with Canseliet. It almost seems as though Canseliet deliberately left behind a number of tantalizing clues. Although he kept his promise to keep Fulcanelli's identity a secret throughout his life, in particular, it must have been very frustrating for him to be continually confronted with the many popular and persistent suggestions that Fulcanelli's identity was Champagne. He often openly expressed his strong disdain for those who continued to believe this false assumption. Thus he may have subconsciously left the clues behind in the faint hope that later researchers would finally discard this unfounded theory.

In his Preface to the First Edition of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, Canseliet (in the translated edition by Mary Sworder) wrote:

“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.”

This was written in October, 1925, so certainly by this time, and actually a “long time” before, Fulcanelli had “disappeared” or “departed.” Although it is immediately tempting to interpret this as the time of Fulcanelli's death, upon closer examination, we found that Canseliet is not specifically clear on what he actually means by the word “departed.” We will have more to say about this interpretation later in this paper when we discuss Fulcanelli's date of death.

In his Preface to the Second Edition of *Les Mystère des Cathédrales*, Canseliet (in the translated edition by Mary Sworder) wrote:

“We must say, certainly, that this man of another age, with his strange appearance, his old-fashioned manners and his unusual occupations, involuntarily attracted the attention of the idle, the curious and the foolish.”

Thus we have a partial description of Fulcanelli's appearance and mannerisms. He was eccentric in appearance, was engaged in unusual occupations and was old-fashioned in mannerism.

Further on in the Preface, Canseliet wrote:

"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 – a signature, whose aristocratic nature is amply shown by his visiting card."

Here we are clearly told of Fulcanelli's aristocratic background. Thus we can expect the man behind Fulcanelli to be a man of titles, perhaps even a French Count. Canseliet also hints that Fulcanelli took measures to erase the traces of his former self in the same manner as the Adepts of old. We will have more to say about this unusual practice below.

The following quote is from Canseliet's Preface to the second edition of *Les Demeures Philosophales*, which he wrote in February, 1958:

"Then the Master commented, his dignified and noble face bathed in long gray hair..."

This again indicates Fulcanelli's "noble" and "dignified" nature, but adds a new physical characteristic: his face "bathed in long gray hair." This indicates that he must have had noticeable facial hair, perhaps a long beard and mustache.

On the following page in this same Preface, Canseliet writes the following:

"...concluded Fulcanelli, drawing this quotation from his prodigious memory with the benevolence of his beautiful smile, his hand raised in a habitual gesture where, that evening, the baphometric ring, was shining, carved in transmuted gold and which had reached him from the Templars of the Commandery of Hennebont in Brittany."

Thus Fulcanelli possessed a "prodigious memory", had a "beautiful smile" and wore a "baphometric ring" of transmuted gold and of Templar origins.

Based on the contents of Fulcanelli's two books, it is readily obvious that he was very knowledgeable about the practice of chemistry and that he had far more than a passing interest in and knowledge of, architecture and its deeper principles and symbolism. His first book was a hermetic study of cathedral construction, detailing much of the symbolism hidden in the construction of the porches, bas-reliefs, facades and other components of various Gothic cathedrals in Europe. This tradition was continued in his second book where he expanded on his hermetic and alchemical investigation of architectural features and symbols.

Another important piece of information concerning Fulcanelli's background is that he participated in the war between France and Germany (1870-1871) under the commandment of the famous architect, Viollet-le-Duc. This is another very interesting

clue that, astonishingly, no other investigator has paid any attention to. During the time of the war Fulcanelli would have been in his thirties. Canseliet tells us how Fulcanelli made a return visit to his former commander after the war and it is likely that they had much to share during this visit as Viollet-le-Duc like Fulcanelli himself had a strong passion for medieval gothic architecture.

But one of the most astonishing clues to the elusive identity of Fulcanelli was given by Canseliet in the context of Fulcanelli's war memorials when he "au passé" reveals Fulcanelli's true profession (our emphasis):

"Trois ans après la malheureuse insurrection de la Commune, Fulcanelli, jeune ingénieur qui avait participé à la défense de Paris, sous les ordres de Monsieur Viollet-le-Duc, rendit visite à son lieutenant-colonel." (*La Tourbe des Philosophes, Number 11, 1980*).

Roughly translated this states:

"Three years after the pitiful insurrection of the Community, Fulcanelli, a young engineer who had participated in the defence of Paris under the commandment of Monsieur Viollet-le-Duc made a return visit to his colonel lieutenant."

Thus we gather another clue of fundamental importance: Fulcanelli was an Engineer. As we will see later in this paper, it is a mystery in itself how this most important fact could have been passed unnoticed by the researchers who claim to have investigated this matter in depth, since it leads to a perfect match with Fulcanelli's identity as both an Engineer and a Chemist, an obviously rare combination.

When Was Fulcanelli's Year of Birth?

We realized that if we were able to determine Fulcanelli's year of birth and approximate year of death (within a year or two), we would have a most reliable tool in which to narrow down various possible candidates who matched some of the other identified characteristics.

We now come to the most important clue of all: when was the year of Fulcanelli's birth? Strangely, this clue has all but been ignored by the many authors who have speculated on who Fulcanelli may have been. Again, the confirmation of when Fulcanelli was born comes from the most reliable of sources, one who was trusted by Fulcanelli – Canseliet.

This clue is found in the interview between Robert Amadou and Eugene Canseliet in Amadou's book *Le Feu du Soleil*. On page 67 of the 1978 Jean-Jacques Pauvert edition we find:

E.C. - Ah! son âge, j'en étais sûr. Alors que je faisais une course auprès de Champagne, de la part de son père, j'arrivai avenue Montaigne à l'hôtel particulier des Lesseps. C'était en 1919. Fulcanelli était là, sans que je m'y attendisse. Il m'a dit qu'il était content, puis il remarqua que je portais, comme c'était l'usage, un brassard noir. «De qui êtes-vous en

deuil? », me dit-il. Je lui répondis que j'avais perdu ma grand-mère que j'aimais beaucoup. «Dommage, me dit-il, mais quel âge avait-elle?» Je lui répondis qu'elle avait quatrevingts ans, très exactement. «Ah tiens! fit Fulcanelli, juste mon âge. » Il n'y a pas de raison de croire qu'il ait menti. Il est donc né en 1839. C'est ainsi, par exemple, qu'il a pu connaître l'archéologue Grasset d'Orcet.”

Roughly translated, this states:

E.C. [Note: Eugene Canseliet] - Ah! I was sure of his age. While I was making a trip with Champagne, on behalf of his father, I arrived at Montaigne Avenue at the private mansion of the Lesseps. It was in 1919. Fulcanelli was there, without my expecting it. He told me that he was content, then he noticed that I carried, as was the custom, a black arm-band. "Who are you in mourning for?" he asked me. I told him that I had lost my grandmother whom I loved very much. "What a pity, he told me, but how old was she?" I answered him that she was exactly eighty years old. "Ah wait! said Fulcanelli, my age precisely". There is no reason to believe that he lied. He was therefore born in 1839. That is why, for example, he could have known the archaeologist Grasset d' Orcet.”

This is an extremely important clue that cannot be disregarded. Here we have a clear and specific affirmation that Fulcanelli's true identity was born in the year 1839 and not decades later as other researchers have consistently suggested.

When did Fulcanelli “Depart”?

Earlier, we mentioned that Canseliet had stated that Fulcanelli had departed “a long time” before October 1925. Thus we know that his death or “departure” had occurred some time before this date. To further our investigation of Fulcanelli's identity, we were left with the challenge of establishing a more precise time for this stated departure. If we could accomplish this goal then, combined with the information that we discovered earlier concerning his year of birth, we would have the necessary tool that we had been searching for that would permit us to narrow the scope of several possible candidates matching some of the other characteristics. In order to find an answer to this question, we turned to several sources, but primarily to the helpful interview that Robert Amadou conducted with Canseliet.

Based on Eugene Canseliet's account in his interviews and, as mentioned by Walter Lang in his Introduction to *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, Canseliet performed a transmutation during September 1922 in a laboratory at Sarcelles (near Paris). We know from his interview and from the Introduction that Julien Champagne, the chemist Gaston Sauvage and Pierre Dujols were all present during the transmutation, and that the transmutation was “based on instructions by Fulcanelli.” This doesn't really confirm that Fulcanelli was also actually physically present since the instructions could have been given in a written rather than an oral form. However, from another source we have confirmation that Fulcanelli was indeed physically present at the transmutation. This is found in the interview between Robert Amadou and Eugene Canseliet in Amadou's book *Le Feu du Soleil*. On page 64 we find:

R.A. - Donc, en 1922, la transmutation se passe sur les conseils de Fulcanelli.

E.C. - Il était présent, puisqu'il me disait ce qu'il fallait faire, et c'est dans une petite cheminée, qui était excellente, que j'ai exécuté l'opération.

Roughly translated, this states:

R.A. [Note: Robert Amadou] - Therefore, in 1922, the transmutation occurred on the advice of Fulcanelli.

E.C. [Note: Eugene Canseliet] - He was present, since he told me what it was necessary to make, and it is in a small chimney, that was excellent, that I have executed the operation.

Thus Fulcanelli was still seen alive near Paris, in September 1922. However, there is additional confirmation for an even later date which indicates that Fulcanelli was still alive some time during 1923. Again, this is found in the interview between Robert Amadou and Eugene Canseliet in Amadou's book *Le Feu du Soleil*. On page 72 we find:

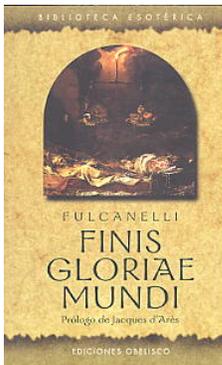
R.A. - Quand Fulcanelli vous a-t-il remis les notes?

E.C. - J'avais trois paquets. Il me les a remis en 1923.

Roughly translated, this states:

R.A. - When did Fulcanelli give you the notes?

E.C. - I had three packages. He gave them to me in 1923.



It is therefore documented that Canseliet received three packages from Fulcanelli in 1923. These packages were sealed in wax and contained the manuscripts for *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, *Les Demeures Philosophales* and *Finis Glorïae Mundi*. Canseliet alone was responsible for their subsequent publication, with the exception of *Finis Glorïae Mundi* which Fulcanelli later withdrew.

The year 1923 is therefore the latest reliable date that we could find to indicate that Fulcanelli was at least still alive until then, although he wasn't necessarily "seen" at that time by his associates. Further literature research may yet locate a later date, or at least a specific month during 1923 when Canseliet received the packages.

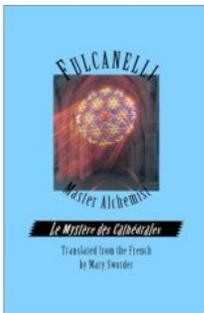
There is yet another indication that Fulcanelli "departed" soon after the date of the transmutation. On page 61-62 of *Le Feu du Soleil* Amadou asks Canseliet if Fulcanelli took him on as a pupil. Canseliet replies that he was Fulcanelli's student for six years, from 1916 to 1922, not as someone working directly with him in a laboratory, but by

receiving advice as well as a specific selection of alchemical books to study. Canseliet then mentions the transmutation that was performed in Sarcelles during 1922. Amadou asks Canseliet if that was the year that he was with Fulcanelli again, and Canseliet replies that 1922 was also the year that Fulcanelli departed. Obviously, Canseliet received the packages from Fulcanelli during 1923, so what seems to be implied is that after September 1922 Canseliet no longer was in direct contact with Fulcanelli, at least until his official death which we will return to later in this paper.

Did Fulcanelli “Depart” or Die?

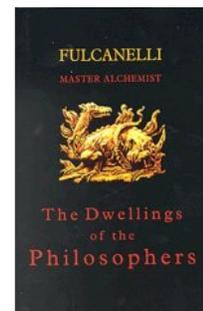
We now have two extremely important clues. Fulcanelli was born in 1839 and died or “departed” either in 1923 or 1924 (it should be noted that the early part of 1925 – a “long time” before October – is also possible but unlikely, since it is difficult to imagine a “long time” representing something less than 10 months). This narrows the search considerably, particularly since few men (especially during the early 1900’s) lived to the ripe old age of 84 or 85.

Earlier, we mentioned that Eugene Canseliet was not clear on his use of the word “departed.” Ordinarily, one would assume that he meant “died,” but other curious documentation seems to imply otherwise. The interpretation of these seemingly contradictory and unusual findings presented us with some challenge although, in the end, we feel that they do not necessarily prejudice our overall theory. For interest’s sake, we present below some of these findings and offer some possible explanations.



Earlier also, we mentioned that Canseliet received three packages from Fulcanelli during 1923 which were the manuscripts for Fulcanelli’s three potential books and that Canseliet was given the responsibility of publishing two of them. Before Canseliet published the first book, *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* in 1925, he sent the final draft to Fulcanelli, who then made a few corrections. Oddly, Canseliet admits that he did not see Fulcanelli in person during this time, nor since 1922.

How then did he manage to get in touch with Fulcanelli and exchange the draft document with him? On page 71 of Amadou’s *Le Feu du Soleil*, we find the answer. Canseliet explains that the exchange was made through the assistance of a certain Mr. Devaux. We will mention this name again later in this paper. What is important to note at this time is that Canseliet reports having exchanged information with Fulcanelli during 1925 and that it was not direct but through a third party. At the same time, Canseliet seems to contradict himself by stating, in his Preface to the First edition to *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, that Fulcanelli had “departed” long before this time.



The timing and nature of Fulcanelli’s departure becomes even more confusing when we examine another interview that Frater Achad conducted with Canseliet on August 17, 1976 (published in *Parachemy, Volume IV, Number 4, Fall 1976*). Canseliet said:

“Fulcanelli left in 1930, the year when *“Demeures Phlosophales”* (Dwellings of the Philosophers) was published.”

This clearly seems to contradict the statement in the Preface to the First Edition of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* in which he stated that Fulcanelli “disappeared” or “departed”, “a long time” before October 1925. There seems to be an unaccountable five-year discrepancy between these two years.

How can this discrepancy be explained? For a possible answer to this we must return to the earlier quote in which Canseliet said:

“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 – a signature, whose aristocratic nature is amply shown by his visiting card.”

To understand this statement, it is necessary to know that there is a recurring tradition amongst alchemists that Adepts who had produced the Philosophers Stone often found it necessary to “fake” their death and live a secret, secluded life, free from the avaricious exploits of those who would stop at nothing, including murder, to wrest the secret from the Adept. Further, according to these traditions, the Adept was able to use their discovery of the medical properties of the Philosophers Stone not only to extend their own lives by at least several decades, but to regain a more youthful appearance and demeanor.

Thus it is possible that what Canseliet was saying was that he believed that Fulcanelli, in the tradition of Adepts, had removed all trace of his former life by actually “faking” his physical departure. The death of the person behind the Fulcanelli identity would have therefore been an elaborate and deliberate charade which would allow Fulcanelli the opportunity to live the protected and healthy life of the reclusive Adept he had become. This view is supported by another statement made by Canseliet in the interview with Frater Achad:

“In 1922 he visited me several times in Sarcelles. When he left in 1930, he was an old man (un vieillard) but when I saw him again in 1952 he looked hardly 50 years old.”

Whether or not there is any validity to this belief by Canseliet does not necessarily affect our argument of who Fulcanelli may have actually been, but helps explain why Canseliet himself may have believed and said what he did. He obviously believed it very deeply, and there are other arguments which may support his extraordinary belief that someone who looked and acted like Fulcanelli may have lived some time after he “disappeared” in 1924, give or take a year (for example, the account by the French researcher, Jacques Bergier in his *Morning of the Magicians*). It is not our intention to explore the validity of these arguments within the scope of this paper, nor do we feel that it is necessary in order to defend our theory.

Thus, in summary, Canseliet says that Fulcanelli “disappeared” or “departed” within a year or so of 1924, at least until the first book was published. He then “left” again in 1930, the year that his second book was published. Thus he (or someone who looked and acted like him) must have returned to visit or contact Canseliet again after his orchestrated death, and sometime between October 1926 and 1930. After this, Canseliet claimed that he didn’t see him again until more than twenty years later in 1952 (incredibly, Fulcanelli would have been about 113 years old at this time). In any event, regardless of whether Fulcanelli continued to survive after the official “death” of his identity or not, we can now logically assume, for our argument, that “officially,” the real identity behind Fulcanelli likely “died” in 1924, give or take a year, possibly in the vicinity of Paris.

Why is Champagne Often Mistaken for Fulcanelli?

The most popular version of Fulcanelli’s identity originated with Robert Ambelain, who carried out a considerable amount of research during the early 1930’s and claimed that Fulcanelli was none other than the painter Jean-Julien Champagne (1877-1932). This same conclusion was reached by Geneviève Dubois in *Fulcanelli dévoilé* (1992).

Ambelain’s identification of Fulcanelli as Champagne was largely based on interviews with Jules Boucher. Boucher and Gaston Sauvage became Champagne’s disciples in 1922 and Boucher provided Ambelain with information which seems to indicate that Champagne had indeed played the role of Fulcanelli, or more correctly, that Champagne himself had claimed to be Fulcanelli. It is known that Boucher dedicated his book *Manuel de Magie Pratique* (1941) to his “Master Fulcanelli.” The difficulty is not whether Champagne claimed to be Fulcanelli (he certainly did), but rather whether this was the actual truth or not. The fact that Champagne introduced himself as Fulcanelli proves nothing in itself.

In addition to Boucher’s testimony, Ambelain also interviewed Jean Schemit, the publisher of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*, who told him that a stranger had visited him during 1926 who had argued for the relationship between gothic architecture and hermetic philosophy. Some weeks later the stranger, accompanied by Canseliet, returned and introduced himself as Champagne. Schemit had noticed that Canseliet always treated Champagne with great dignity and always used the epithet “Maître” (Master). Because of these observations, Schemit concluded that Fulcanelli and Champagne were the same person.

In the book *Fulcanelli Dévoilé*, Geneviève Dubois presents arguments that are similar to those of Ambelain. The only unique new finding of any significance is the interesting revelation of Champagne’s previously unknown relationship with the Egyptologist René Schwaller de Lubicz. The information reveals that Champagne had told Lubicz that he was Fulcanelli. Lubicz subsequently made a red-pencil drawing of Champagne, which bears on its back the inscription “Fulcanelli.” Similarly, in the book *Al-kemi* by André Vanedenbroeck, there are numerous indications that also clearly demonstrate that Lubicz believed that Champagne was Fulcanelli. For example, on page 76, Lubicz states that

Fulcanelli was 10 years older than himself which is a perfect match for Champagne who was born in 1877 while Lubicz was born in 1887.

In addition, on page 131 of *Fulcanelli Dévoilé*, Dubois presents several dedications from Fulcanelli to Lubicz which are obviously in Champagne's own hand. There is a similar dedication in Jules Bouchers copy of *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* which is in Champagnes hand but signed as "Fulcanelli" (*Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jaques, Number 9*).

All this makes it perfectly clear that Champagne did indeed often present himself as "Fulcanelli," but this does not necessarily mean that he actually was Fulcanelli. But why would Champagne pretend to be Fulcanelli if he wasn't? Was it because he personally sought personal fame and glamour, or is it possible that there was another more profound motive?

There is indeed a possible motive that may explain many of the unusual contradictions that occur throughout this strange play-like story. Champagne may well have convincingly appeared to be Fulcanelli to many, because his part in the play might actually have been to act as Fulcanelli on behalf of Fulcanelli's own considered motivation. By revealing himself as Fulcanelli to people such as Jules Boucher, Gaston Sauvage and Schwaller de Lubicz, he would have been able to draw attention away from the actual Fulcanelli thus helping to preserve his true identity. It is also possible that the double visit to the publisher Jean Schemit mentioned earlier was not just a whim, but a carefully planned strategy in order to set out a red herring and hinder speculation.

Champagne also provided another curious clue when he completed his last emblem in *Le Mystère des Cathédrales* (which unfortunately was taken away from the English version). This shows a knight hiding behind a helmet and a heraldic shield surrounded by the phrase: UBER CAMPA AGNA. Phonetically, this may be read as: "Hubert Champagne". According to Jules Bouche, Champagne's first name was indeed "Hubert", a name which he got from his father. This clue was noticed by Ambelain as long ago as 1930, who obviously saw this as further evidence for Champagne's identity as Fulcanelli. It is equally plausible to assume that this was only Champagne's clever way of adding his final touch on his contribution as an illustrator of Fulcanelli's book. Or it may have been done with the specific intention of spreading even further the belief that Champagne was actually Fulcanelli.

Champagne and The Mysterious Mr. Devaux

Let us now return to the mysterious Mr. Devaux, who we recall as the person administrating the contacts between Fulcanelli and Canseliet after Fulcanelli departed in 1922. Who he was may help shed some light on Champagne's peculiar behaviour, of which we will have more to say below. Briefly then, Mr. Devaux, whose first name was Gaston, was none other than Champagne's own brother-in-law!

So we see that after 1922 all the contacts between Canseliet and Fulcanelli went directly through Gaston Devaux, Champagne's brother-in-law. It is also very interesting to note that Dubois, in *Fulcanelli Dévoilé* states that all of the letter correspondence between Champagne and Lubicz was kept secret by cleverly routing all of Champagne's mail directly to Devaux's residence rather than to the apartment in which he lived. Thus Champagne managed to keep his relationship with Lubicz completely concealed from his other friends, such as Canseliet, Jules Boucher and Gaston Sauvage. This strange action may have been part of an involved strategy to keep his more private and important work secret (for example, Lubicz and Champagne worked together on reproducing the red and blue glass of Chartres). At the same time, he may have been trying to encourage Lubicz in the belief that Champagne and Fulcanelli were the same identity, without also causing any confusion in the mind of Canseliet since Canseliet knew that Champagne was not Fulcanelli. In fact, Canseliet often ridiculed this type of speculation by others for the rest of his life. This suggests that Canseliet himself may have been the victim of some mystification. On this point Dubois also agrees, because it is evident that Champagne kept his relation to Lubicz secret from the eyes of his other friends, including Canseliet.

The curious reader is directed to *Les Cahiers de la Tour Saint-Jaques Number 9* in which Robert Ambelain's complete argument is to be found, along with a long reply by Canseliet in which he challenges and rejects all the points that attempt to identify Champagne as Fulcanelli. One must carefully keep in mind that Canseliet's writings and interviews will always remain as the primary source of information for this type of research and, if one considers him to be a liar, then, it would seem very problematic to draw any positive conclusions about Fulcanelli's identity whatsoever.

The suggestion that Champagne may have deliberately assisted Fulcanelli as an agent to help secure his private identity may well encourage some of our readers to add our names to the growing list of conspiracy-lovers, but we wish to emphasize that this is only a hypothesis based on supporting evidence. It cannot be denied that Champagne attempted to make certain people believe that he actually was Fulcanelli and it would be remiss for us not to consider alternative motives for this strange behaviour other than just a simple attempt to impress others. If that was so, then why was Champagne's own brother-in-law given the highly trusted role of acting as a personal secretary to Fulcanelli? Further evidence of Devaux's fraternal closeness to Fulcanelli can be found. According to Dubois in *Fulcanelli Dévoilé*, page 122, Gaston Devaux possessed an exact replica of the golden Baphomet ring, which Fulcanelli, as well as Champagne, is said to have worn. One may perhaps ask: was this the sign for their secret pact? Perhaps we will never know.

It is undeniable that the person behind the pseudonym of Fulcanelli wanted to remain anonymous forever. So, if the intention was to disappear and cover all trails, what would be better than adapting a pseudonym and also finding a person who would willingly act at being that person? All sources confirm that Jules Boucher and Gaston Sauvage became Champagne's disciples in 1922, during the exact same year that Fulcanelli departed. Obviously, Jules Boucher could not suspect any other candidate likely to be Fulcanelli other than Champagne because at that time the true Fulcanelli had already departed!

Another popular argument that Champagne was Fulcanelli is derived from the witness lady Labille, the door-keeper of 59 bis Rochechouart where both Canseliet and Champagne had lived in a small apartment. She said that only three people ever came to visit Champagne: Canseliet, Jules Boucher and Gaston Sauvage. But one must note that Canseliet and Champagne only moved to 59 bis Rochechouart during the early part of 1925 – three years after Fulcanelli’s departure. So this is not a reliable argument that Fulcanelli must have been one of these persons.

One may therefore consider the strange actions of Champagne and Gaston Devaux as a carefully planned plot whose purpose was to lay a smoke-screen to cover the traces of the true Fulcanelli. Or one may consider the behaviour of Champagne as a vain attempt to create a mystical shimmering around his personality. It is up to the reader to decide. But what remains quite certain is that Champagne’s profile does not in any way match the few facts that Canseliet left regarding the secret identity of his master Fulcanelli.

Profile of Fulcanelli’s Characteristics

Based on the foregoing research, the following is a brief summary of the few characteristics that we now know about Fulcanelli:

1. He was born in 1839.
2. He died (“disappeared” or “departed”) either in 1923 or 1924 (the early part of 1925, “long before” October, is also possible but unlikely). It is possible that he died in the vicinity of Paris
3. He was an aristocrat.
4. He had a strange, eccentric appearance.
5. He was trained as an Engineer.
6. He had a strong chemical background
7. He had a possible architectural background
8. He was familiar with Paris.
9. Fulcanelli participated in the war of 1870-1871 between France and Germany.
10. He had a dignified, noble face with a beautiful smile.
11. His face was “bathed in long gray hair.”
12. He wore a “Baphometric ring” of transmuted gold and of Templar origin.

Why Current Candidates Do Not Match the Profile

Equipped with the knowledge of Fulcanelli's year of birth and approximate date of departure, we quickly saw that not one of the proposed candidates mentioned by other researchers were born in 1839, the specified year of Fulcanelli's birth. Thus, it is difficult to take any of those arguments seriously. In fact, the closest that any of the proposed candidates comes in terms of the year of birth, is Pierre Dujols, who was born a full 23 years later! The following are the more popular candidates suggested by other researchers, along with their birth and death dates:

Pierre Dujols	March 22, 1862 – April 19, 1926
Jean-Julian Champagne	January 23, 1877 – August 26, 1932
René A. Schwaller de Lubicz	December 7, 1877 – December, 1961
Eugène Canseliet	December 18, 1899 – April 17, 1982

Fulcanelli's Most Likely Identity

Using similar methods of research, logic, deduction and elimination, both Christer Böke and John Koopmans independently arrived at the very same unique conclusion. Christer was first to arrive at the conclusion, while some time later, John's own rapidly narrowing research, focusing on a small list of French scientists/chemists, was almost immediately concluded when Christer pointed out the vital clue, Fulcanelli's year of birth.

Our first task was to prepare a list of well-known French scientists and chemists born during the 1800's. This produced a list of several dozen names. The next task was to isolate those who were specifically born in the required year, 1839. This immediately resulted in a single name: Comte Louis Marie Hilaire Bernigaud Chardonnet de Grange, who was born on May 1, 1839 (Mayday). Imagine our surprise when we also discovered that he died in Paris, on March 12, 1924! This satisfies the very restricted condition that he died ("departed") either in 1923 or 1924, and possibly in the vicinity of Paris. Thus Chardonnet immediately passed the two most critical criteria in our list of requirements. All that remained was to determine whether the other characteristics matched the profile.

Our research also indicated that:

1. Chardonnet was born into an aristocratic family at Besançon, and used the title "Count." This satisfies the requirement that he was a French aristocrat.
2. Chardonnet trained first as a civil engineer at the École Polytechnique, Paris. This gave him a good background in the architectural principles expressed throughout his books and places him in Paris, giving him the required familiarity and access.

Further, the fact that Fulcanelli was an engineer, as stated by Canseliet, is a perfect match to Hilaire Bernigaud Chardonnet who indeed was an engineer, educated at the famous "X", École Polytechnique in Paris. This reminds us of a certain passage which appears in

Les Demeures des Philosophes (Fulcanelli's second book) in which the author curiously recounts a pun, once traditionally used by the students of the Polytechnic school:

“In that sense, and in the slang of the students, it serves to single out the French Polytechnic school by securing the superiority that the ‘taupins and dear comrades’ of that school would not permit to be discussed or disputed. The best pupils, candidates to the school, are united in each promotion or ‘taupe’, by a cabalistic formula composed of an X in whose opposite angles the chemical symbols of sulphur and potassium hydrate are written:

S X KOH

This is pronounced, in slang of course, “soufre et potasse pour l’X.” [Translators note: literally sulphur and potassium for the X, but in French slang it means ‘suffer and swot up for the school’.] (*The Dwellings of the Philosophers*, p. 198-9).

One may ask: how did Fulcanelli know about this somehow odd and very particular tradition, unless he had been very familiar with the student life of that school? If Fulcanelli himself had been at student at the School, he would naturally have come across this kind of information. As we have already stated, Hilaire Bernigaud Chardonnet was a student of the Polytechnique school which he entered during 1861.

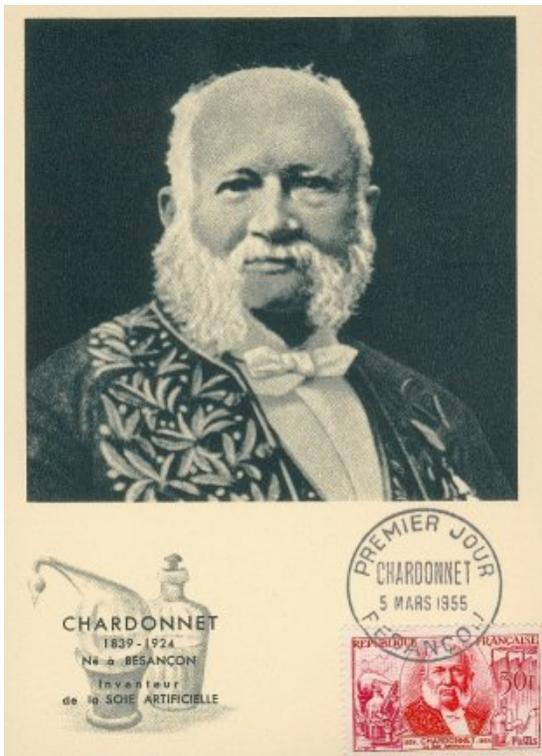
3. Chardonnet worked directly under Louis Pasteur, who was studying diseases in silkworms at the time. This work inspired Chardonnet to seek an artificial replacement for silk which he first patented in 1884. This gave him an exceptional background in theoretical and practical chemistry and a recognized standing as a respected and knowledgeable chemist, the same type of background that Fulcanelli possessed.

4. Chardonnet participated in the war of 1870-1871 between France and Germany, just as Fulcanelli was said to have done. During the war, Chardonnet was at Vernay which, at the time was not mobilized, but on his initiative, a national guard was established and Chardonnet was promoted to a Captain, and later Major of Charette.

5. It is clear from pictures of Chardonnet that he did have a somewhat “strange appearance” as Fulcanelli was reported to have. For example, see the picture below of the first-day issue (March 5, 1955) of the stamp which commemorates Chardonnet him.

Not only did he sport a drooping mustache that joined an unusual, partial, gray beard that extended to his collar, but the beard was shaved at the chin and the area of the neck below. This also matches the description of Fulcanelli, whose face was “bathed in long gray hair.”

Brief Biography of Louis-Marie-Hilaire Bernigaud, Comte de Chardonnet



Chardonnet was born in Besançon, France, on May 1, 1839. He began his career by training to be a civil engineer in Paris (École Polytechnique), but later worked under the famous French biochemist, Louis Pasteur, who was studying diseases that were attacking French silkworms. In 1870-1871, Chardonnet participated in the war between France and Germany and was stationed at Vernay. In 1878 Chardonnet began his experimentation for producing artificial silk. In 1884, after experimenting with mulberry leaves, the food of silkworms, Chardonnet invented rayon (artificial silk, the beginnings of the synthetic fiber of today), the first manufactured fiber. He turned the mulberry leaves into cellulose pulp with nitric and sulphuric acids, dissolved this in alcohol and ether and then, by drawing out the filaments of the fiber, he coagulated them in heated air as the alcohol and ether evaporated. He

submitted his description of a process for producing the artificial nitro-silk to the Academy of Sciences on May 12, 1884 and was granted the first of his 48 artificial silk patents. Previous attempts by the Swiss chemist Georges Audémars, who invented the first crude silk in 1855 by dipping a needle into liquid mulberry bark pulp and gummy rubber to make threads, was too slow to be practical. The artificial silk that Chardonnet patented in 1884 was a cellulose-based fabric initially known as Chardonnet silk. However, it was very flammable and was later removed from the market and the problem resolved by a method of denitration. Chardonnet opened a factory in Besancon in 1890 and another in Hungary in 1904. In 1891 in Besancon, Chardonnet spun his first industrial artificial silk with a production of 110 Kg/day. Chardonnet's artificial silk made its debut at the Paris Exposition of 1891 where it was immediately backed and became a success. In 1919 Chardonnet was elected as an official member of the Academy of Science. The term "rayon" was first used in 1924, the year of Chardonnet's death, and at that time DuPont bought the rights for Rayon, paving the way for modern synthetics such as nylon and Lycra. Chardonnet died in Paris, on March 12, 1924. (Picture Credit: permission granted by Klaus Beneke, Sept. 29, 2003)

Further Research

Although we feel that we have hereby established a strong and supportable basis for the link between Fulcanelli and his possible identity as Chardonnet, this unique theory is still in its infancy and could benefit from further academic research. Because of time and resource limitations, there are still many details pertaining to this theory that remain to be more fully researched and/or verified. For example, the acquisition of a detailed biography of Chardonnet could provide additional facts, characteristics or circumstances

that may possibly solidify the link between the man Chardonnet and the pseudonym Fulcanelli. Also, an examination of Chardonnet's notes and writings may reveal a particular style similar to the style used by Fulcanelli in his books. In addition, in *Alchimiques Mémoires* in *La Tourbe des Philosophes* (May 12, 1979), Canseliet reveals that Fulcanelli's residence was situated close to the Temple de l'Amitié. The house is described as having 8 rooms and 12 windows and containing an underground laboratory. A researcher could investigate whether any of Chardonnet's residences, while he stayed in Paris, matched the description and general location of the residence where Fulcanelli stayed.

Part I (*Alchemy Journal Vol.7 No.3*) is a summarization of the accepted knowledge regarding Fulcanelli based on primary sources of information provided by his trusted confidant, Eugene Canseliet, establish an approach they will use to review whether or not several proposed candidates are in fact the true identify of the famous and mysterious Master Alchemist, and attempt to establish the date of his birth and "departure" or death.

Part II (*Alchemy Journal Vol.7 No.4*) reveals the authors' beliefs about the likelihood of these candidates actually being Fulcanelli and presents their proposed answer to the question: Who was Fulcanelli?

The cover illustration, drawn by artist-chemist Juliene Champagne, is from a 1926 French edition of Fulcanelli's *Le Mystère des Cathédrales*.

John Koopmans and Christer Böke encourage others to continue with this line of research and to share with us any further credible evidence that may either support or refute the theory as developed. For anyone willing to contribute any additional credible findings relating to this theory, please contact both of us at the following email address: Fulcanelli_research@yahoo.com .