

Bill Cooper - Mystery of Fulcanelli - Transcript

2001, Oct. 30

HOTT – The Hour of the Time

Episode #1924

Transcribed and edited by JZ.

Useful links:

<http://www.vincentbridgeslegacy.com/the-fulcanelli-mystery-1-the-apocalypse-the-lost-generation-and-the-rediscovery-of-alchemy/>

<https://archive.org/details/the-mysteries-of-the-great-cros-jay-weidner>

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Note from the editor:

Bill Cooper began explaining the mystery of Fulcanelli in one of his final broadcasts on The Hour of the Time. The episode largely consists of Bill reading from the first chapter of a book called Monument to the End of Time by Weidner and Bridges. This book is no longer in print but a revised version of it is in print with the title The Mystery of the Great Cross of Hendaye. We can infer from Bill's comments near the end that he intended to go into this book in more detail in future broadcasts. As it stands it remains for researchers to find that book, and Fulcanelli's books, to read them, and to make sense of the rose which lies beneath the surface.

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TRANSCRIPT BEGINS

HOUR OF THE TIME THEME PLAYS

You're listening to the hour of the time, I'm William Cooper. Good evening folks, tonight is one of those nights you'd better get pen and paper, a pencil and something to snack on, and maybe a glass of water or tea, or whatever it is you like to drink while you listen to the hour of the time. You're going to want to take notes and I'm going to tell you some books that you're going to want to read as we continue on our quest, our little march toward Albion.

Plays Bette Midler – the Rose

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Tonight folks we're going to talk about one of the greatest mysteries of the last century.

(Reading from Chapter one of Bridges' and Weidner's The Mystery of the Great Cross of Hendaye)

From our perspective, during the second year of the new millennium, cosmic end of cycle perspective, WWI, "The Great War", to those who lived through it, feels as ancient as all those other senseless wars in history. Our only connections with that conflict are faded sepia toned images of our ancestors, killing each other for reasons vaguely understood even to themselves. Most people in this listening audience would be hard put to explain exactly why World War One was fought, and exactly why so many men gave their lives in it.

Demoted by an even greater war, one so large that nothing but the title World War could possibly encompass it, The Great War became a mere fancy-dress prelude, to an entire century of destruction

and horror. And indeed the 20th century was exactly that. The bloodiest, most devastating, most destructive century, in the history of the world.

Reading of the ideals and passions of that long forgotten era feels embarrassing to most of us now. If we think of it at all, we assign it an emotional value somewhere between a massive industrial accident, and the migration of lemmings to the sea. When we look back through history we find many wars and disasters, plagues and conquests, volcanic eruptions, climatic changes and mass migrations, but ladies and gentlemen, we find nothing quite like the Great War. Four hundred years of European intellectual moral and technical superiority created and fed the engines of industrialized murder. These forces in turn consumed the very social order which had created them. And after four years the self proclaimed masters of the universe lay broken and bleeding in the wasteland, saved from ultimate extinction only by the interference of the United States, and its revolutionary republic. [Bill changes democracy to republic, Ed.]

Cultural suicide perhaps, an apocalypse by any other name ladies and gentlemen, is still an eschatological event. it's the end of the world for the inhabitants of that world. For example, near the end of the Great War in September of 1918, the Turkish 12th army, holding the ridge line in front of Damascus, which included the ancient mound of Megiddo, was attacked and destroyed by the combined use of airplanes, tanks, and cavalry. This battle, eerily described in St. John's Revelation, chapter sixteen, suggests that Armageddon occurred in 1918.

Not only is the battle clearly delineated, but it occurred in the midst of the worst plague since the Black Death of the 14th century. Revelation's apocalypse looks much like the history of the 20th century, leading up to *one final millennial explosion*. Could this be true? Well ladies and gentlemen, the millennium has come and gone, and so we know it has not as yet occurred, there is always the possibility that our method of keeping time is not the same method used in predicting time by John in his book of revelation.

Was the prophecy of revelation an ongoing process that essentially started some time *before* the Great War? Was the 20th century an unfolding of the final book of the bible? When the Great War finally ended, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the old world, with its noble and imperial ways, was well and truly *dead*.

The victorious allies propped up the corpse of Europe, and using all the tricks of the undertaker's trade, gave it the brief appearance of animation. This lasted just long enough to necromancy a treaty together

at Versailles. It decomposed soon enough, its stench conditioning Europe for the burned bacon aroma of the Nazis soon to come [Changed from ovens, Ed]. But while it lasted this zombie summer of fast fading European superiority, galvanized the entire world.

The epicenter of this fleeting renaissance was Paris, the city of light. During the war this city had been the goal for which millions of men had marched, fought, bled, and died. As it had been for centuries, Paris was a symbol to *both* sides in the conflict, of something irrepressible in the human character. And after the war it became a Mecca for all those who felt that the world *must be changed* somehow, by the horror and sacrifice of the war. And that this change *must* mean something, *say* something, and *do* something.

They went to Paris like insects drawn to the light of immolated cultures, having burned their candles all at once in the final Auto da Fe of European civilization. They firmly believed that out of that conflagration would come a better world. Same dreamers dreaming the same dream.

And so they came to Paris to help create that world: mystics, visionaries, painters, poets, artists of all kind, scientists, political thinkers, revolutionaries, ex-patriots, [added by Bill, Ed.] all looking for that *new world* of hope, peace, and freedom, which they felt *must* grow out of “the war to end all wars.”

The conflict they thought had made them all equal now. They mingled on the boulevards, they drank and talked at the cafes and bars and bookstalls, they plotted and painted late into the night in small cold-water flats in the Montmartre and danced and drank in the clubs of demi-monde’s dives of the Latin Quarter.

As if driven by deep rooted survival guilt, everyone wanted to live fast, fully, and gloriously. Paris in the post-apocalyptic twenties, appeared to be the light of the world, the flashpoint of history, and the beginning of the end of time itself.

And remember that statement, the beginning of the end of time itself, remember that. Because I’m going to repeat that theme throughout this broadcast.

Out of all this too brief efflorescence emerged artistic, literary, social, political, and scientific concepts that shaped much of the rest of the 20th century. From the Surrealists, such as Hans Arp, and Marcel Duchamp, to the mathematics of Paul Dirac, to the literary pyrotechnics of James Joyce, the idea of transformation, *transformation*, bubbled just below the surface. Remember that also, for that will be too, a recurring theme.

It was at the zenith of this transformative undercurrent, that in 1926, an anonymous volume, issued in a luxury edition of 300 copies only by a small Paris publishing firm known mostly for artistic reprints, rocked the Parisian occult underworld. Its title, *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*. The author, Fulcanelli.

He claimed that the great secret of Alchemy, the queen of western occult science, was plainly displayed on the walls of Paris's own cathedral, Notre-Dame de Paris. And he was right. As you've heard on previous broadcasts.

In 1926, Alchemy by our post-modern lights, a quaint and discredited renaissance pseudo-science was in the process of being reclaimed and reconditioned by two of the most influential movements of the century. Surrealism and psychiatry, stumbled onto Alchemy at about the same time. And each attached their own notions about reality to the ancient concept. Carl Jung spent the Twenties teasing out a theory of the archetypal unconscious form of the symbolic tapestry of alchemical images, and studying how these symbols are expressed in the dream state. The poet philosopher Andre Breton, and the Surrealists made an intuitive leap of faith, and proclaimed that the alchemical process could be explained artistically. Breton in his 1924 Surrealist manifesto, announced that Surrealism was nothing but alchemical art.

Fulcanelli's book would have an indirect effect on both of these intellectual movements, indirect ladies and gentlemen, and here we begin this great mystery.

Indirect because the book managed a major literary miracle. It became influential while remaining, apparently, completely unknown outside of French occult and alchemical circles, and remember there were only 300 copies in existence.

Now this is perhaps the strangest of all the mysteries surrounding *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*. One illustration suffices to show the magnitude of the occasion. The occasion, ladies and gentlemen, being the occlusion, the hiding, the secreting of the source of *all* that was influenced. Take any art history text on the gothic cathedrals written in the last 30 years and look at what it says about the obscure images found on the walls and entrance ways of Notre-Dame. You will find that four times out of five, that alchemy is mentioned as a possible meaning for these vaguely Christian images. You will also find especially if the text book is in English, that Fulcanelli and *The Mystery of the Cathedrals* are not ever given as a source or mentioned in any way whatsoever, although it is the *only* source from which such information could have been obtained.

There was, and you may have seen it, a popular television special on alchemy hosted by Leonard Nimoy. It used the very same images from Notre Dame that Fulcanelli presents in his book, describes them in direct Fulcanelli paraphrase and never, ever mentions the source as Fulcanelli, or *Le Mystere Des Cathedrals*.

It's as if the concept entered common usage without ever being individually articulated. Do you believe that? Well, we may call this the dog that didn't bark in the night effect. Like the dog that doesn't make a sound while the house is robbed, Fulcanelli's work is conspicuous by its absence. On the other hand, the book's widespread influence *suggests* an importance far beyond the antiquarian idea that the cathedrals were designed as alchemical texts. To understand the silence, it might be a good idea to try and understand Fulcanelli.

The earliest known incident where his name was ever mentioned, was in 1926 when publisher Jean Schemit received a visit from a small man dressed as a pre-war Bohemian, with a long Asterix, you know, that big Gaul style moustache, thick, crossing the midline of the face about the lip, but *not*, not curled up or hanging down.

The man wanted to talk about gothic architecture. The "green argot" of its sculptural symbols and how slang was a kind of punning code, which he called the "Language of the Birds. A few weeks later Mr. Schemit introduced to him again as Gene, or Jean in the French, Julien Champagne, an illustrator of a proposed book by a mysterious alchemist called simply, Fulcanelli. Mr. Schemit thought that all three, the visitor, the author, and the illustrator, were the same man, and perhaps, perhaps they were.

And this is the most credible Fulcanelli sighting, beyond this he exists as words upon a page and in some occult circles as a mythic alchemical immortal, with a status or identity of a St. Germain. There were two things that everyone agreed upon concerning Fulcanelli. One, he was definitely a mind to be reckoned with, and two, he was a true enigma.

What seems to have happened is that Fulcanelli's student, a young occult upstart named Eugene Canseliet, offered the publisher the manuscript of *The Mystery of the Cathedrals*, or in French, *Le Mystere Des Cathedrals*. Schemit bought it, and Canseliet wrote a preface for the book in which he stated that the author, his "master" Fulcanelli, had departed this realm. What he meant by realm, no one really knows. He then goes on to thank Julien Champagne, the man who Schemit thought was Fulcanelli, for the illustrations.

Champagne, a minor symbolist artist and inventor far into an absinthe fueled decline, had gathered around him a small entourage including Canseliet. The talk always centered around alchemy when they met in the cafes of the Montmartre. Champagne lived nearby in the rue de Rochechouart, and his sixth floor room in the crumbling Parisian tenement was often the scene of late night symposiums on all sorts of occult subjects. Now in this country when I say occult, many people shiver and sort of cross their arms across their chest in fear. Occult simply means secret, or hidden. It has no connotation of evil, unless of course it's used in an evil manner. It is simply hidden information.

To his young friends he must have seemed like a ghost from another age, with his unfashionably long hair, his riddles, his moustache, and most of all his claim to know the secrets of *alchemy*.

At the time no one else but Schemit seemed to believe that Champagne was Canseliet's master, Fulcanelli. His taste for great quantities of Pernod and absinthe indicated a man too dissipated to be as knowledgeable and erudite as the author of *Cathedrals*. However, he certainly did know a *real* alchemist, whoever Fulcanelli was, and his illustrations show that he indeed had a profound understanding of the alchemical art, no doubt about it whatsoever.

So we are left with the unsolvable mystery of the missing master alchemist, a man who does not seem to exist. And yet, is recreated constantly in the imagination of every seeker who treads the path.

A perfect foil for projection, we might even think it was all a joke, some kind of massive elaborate hoax. Except for the material itself, when one turns to *Mystery of the Cathedrals*, he finds a witty intelligence who seems quite sure of the importance of his information. This "Fulcanelli" *knows* something, and is *trying* to communicate his knowledge, of this there can be no doubt.

Fulcanelli's main point, the key to unravelling the mystery, lies in what he calls the "phonetic law" of the "spoken kaballah", or the "Language of the Birds". This punning multi-lingual word play can be used to reveal unusual, and according to Fulcanelli, meaningful associations between ideas. "What unsuspected marvels we should find if we knew how to dissect words to strip them of their barks and liberate the spirit, the divine light which is within," Fulcanelli writes. He claims that in our day this is the natural language of the outsiders, the outlaws and heretics at the fringes of society, and a secret communication, methods used by the adepts of all of the mysteries.

And now I'm going to depart from Fulcanelli for just a few seconds, and I'm going to read you a quote from St. John, chapter one, verse one, of the King James Bible. St. John, 1:1, in the beginning was the

word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. There's more to language than most of you would ever even want to believe.

This language of the birds was also called the "green language" of the Freemasons ("All the initiates expressed themselves in cant," Fulcanelli reminds us) who built the art gothique of the cathedrals. Ultimately the "art cot," or the "art of light" is derived from the Language of the Birds, which seems to be a sort of Ur-language taught by both Jesus and the ancients. It is also related to the Sufi text by Attar the Chemist [Attar of Nishapur, Ed.], entitled "The Conference of the Birds." And de Tasse's French translation of this work, that Fulcanelli references, the "conference" of the title is translated as "language". De Tasse goes on to explain the complex linguistic metaphor beneath the simple fable. And Fulcanelli uses the same method to decode the alchemical meaning of the cathedrals.

Fulcanelli also claims that Rabelais', Gargantua and Pantagruel, is "a novel in cant, that is, written in the secret language. You've heard me discuss this before on many, many broadcasts. The secret language, the lost word of freemasonry.

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(From the 31 to 41 marks there is silence)

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You don't really see it.

Offhandedly, he throws in Tiresias, the Greek seer who reveals to mortals the secrets of Olympus. Tiresias was taught the language of the birds by Athena, the goddess of wisdom. Just as casually, Fulcanelli mentions the similarity between gothic and goetic, suggesting that gothic art is a magic art.

From this we see that Fulcanelli's message, that there is a secret in the cathedrals, and that this secret was placed there by a group of initiates, of which Fulcanelli is obviously one. It depends upon an abundance of ornate imagery and associations which overpower the intellect, lulling one into an intuitive state of acceptance. Fulcanelli, like Shakespeare, overwhelms the reader with his brilliance. It is so difficult to accept this man as anything but an incredible intelligence.

I read the *Mystery of the Cathedrals* years ago. I recommend that you find the English version, buy it, read it. Be prepared to be overwhelmed, confounded, amazed, and gleeful, all at the same time. The author, once again, is simply Fulcanelli.

And even after careful reading, of the *Mystery of the Cathedrals*, I found that the “mystery” of the cathedrals is never really explained. And that what one assumes to be the basic mystery of alchemy is only glancingly delineated. You see glimpses here and glimpses there, and shadows play across the mind. It’s great fun.

There are allusions that escape the reader as easily as a mosquito glimpsed out of the corner of your eye. At moments, a glimpse of a great truth flits by, giving a hint of something absolutely incredible. And then, just like the mosquito, it’s gone.

Cathedrals feels more like a Japanese haiku poem, actually. One that is ephemeral and fleeting. Some people reading the *Mystery of the Cathedrals* become very frustrated. They start over, reading even more carefully, following the allusions and associations, trying to find and pin down the core of meaning that one senses is there somewhere. And it is there. But remember, you are the profane, seeing the exoteric meaning of an esoteric secret language, in which Fulcanelli is explaining one of the great mysteries of the occult sciences, and you just don’t get it.

And all of this makes *Cathedrals* an almost perfect Surrealist text. For those of you who are enamored by Surrealism, like Surrealist art, like to read Surrealist books, will love the *Mystery of the Cathedrals*.

[*Cathedrals* is] a modern alchemical version of Lautreamont’s *Chants de Maldoror*, the Surrealists’ favorite 19th century novel. Fulcanelli’s use of punning word play to convey spiritual meaning, would have absolutely delighted the Surrealists, and if there are any listening it will delight you also. It also embraced Rabelais and understood this kind of linguistic alchemy in terms of the correspondences and connections between objects or ideas on different levels, or *scales* of being. A classic example of this, being Lautreamont’s “sudden juxtaposition on a dissecting table of a sewing machine and an umbrella.”

And yet, even though Fulcanelli’s basic idea - an operational and linguistic alchemy used by sages or Hermetic Philosophers to transform reality - became a part of Surrealism’s intellectual currency, none of the Surrealists mention Fulcanelli, or *Mystery of the Cathedrals*. Once again, he is occluded.

Only Max Ernst makes any allusion to Fulcanelli, in *Beyond Painting*, published in 1936. I also recommend that you read that book, *Beyond Painting*, 1936. However, ladies and gentlemen, by the late

1940's, the work of the movement's founder, Andre Breton, in both his book *Arcana 17* and the catalogue for the 1947 Surrealist Exhibition, appears to have been heavily influenced by Fulcanelli.

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Break – plays Bette Midler's *The Rose*

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Surrealism in 1948, or I should say 1947, that was the year of the catalogue, *Surrealism in 1947*, in fact that's the name of the catalogue, the Surrealist exhibition catalogue, is full of seemingly Fulcanelli inspired articles, such as "Liberty of Language", by Arpad Mezei. In this article he explains the "occult dialectic through linguistics." Let me say that again, in this article he explains the *occult* dialectic through linguistics. If you don't know what dialectic means, you had better look it up.

Mezei goes on to announce that *language* is "really an *ensemble of symbols*. And this conception of language is not far off from that which existed in magical civilizations, because the interchangeability of reality and language... is the base, and the principle key of all hermetic *activity*."

And if you've been paying attention lately in this country, you can see how it can be *used*, in the alchemical process, to bring about a transformation or a transmutation, in the minds of what the socialists call, the masses.

You see what I'm really talking about here, and not even mentioning, but everyone listening who is well versed in the history of the occult, knows that just below the surface of what I am giving you, lies a stream. A stream of knowledge is flowing from my lips through this microphone, into the ears of those who *understand*, those who can hear.

Everyone else doesn't hear the true message at all. They're listening to an entirely different story. Underneath all that I am telling you in this history is the manipulation of the secret order of the *Fama Fraternitatis Rosi Crucis*, or the Rose and Cross, an order that is still very much active today, and still practicing alchemy.

Occult dialectic through linguistics, an ensemble of symbols, the key, the principle key of all hermetic activity. As if to make the point even more pointed, Arpad Mezei and Marcel Jean contributed an article on the occult meaning of the surrealist's favorite novel, *The Chants of Maldoror*. Their analysis of this novel could be applied just as fruitfully to the *Mystery des Cathedrales*. Indeed, following Mezei and

Jean's advice by working *backwards*, listen to me carefully, by working backwards, is a good roadmap for navigating Fulcanelli.

Andre Breton himself contributed a chart for the catalogue of Surrealism for 1947, showing personalities and their associations with the images of the Tarot cards, a continuation of the ideas that he had begun in his earlier work, *Arcana 17*. And ladies and gentlemen while the Tarot's not an obvious connection between Fulcanelli and the *Mystery of the Cathedrals*, as we will soon see, Breton's use of the Tarot as alchemical metaphors, suggests that he had read Fulcanelli, even closer than most. Because he at least understood some of the underlying message of the book. Ten years later, in 1957, Breton wrote *The Art of Magic*, in which he insists that magic is an innate capacity of all humanity, which can never be long suppressed or controlled. And with that admission, Surrealism takes its place alongside the literary works of Joyce, Lovecraft, and Borges, as an important 20th century artistic addition to the western occult tradition.

It would seem that Fulcanelli contributed to that artistic evolution, except the conspicuous absence of direct reference argues against it. Nowhere is he mentioned as a source, and yet his work was the only known published work of its kind in existence from which that information could have come.

Fulcanelli's ideas seem to be present in surrealism from its inception, growing more prominent as the movement matured. And possibly one answer lies in the anonymity of Fulcanelli himself. Since "Fulcanelli", we believe, is a pseudonym, the Surrealists may have absorbed his ideas from a common source, who may have been the real person behind the name.

Now that's a very interesting proposition. Yet even that idea fails to explain the curious reluctance of *anyone*, Surrealist, art historian, alchemical scholar, anyone, to address the meaning of Fulcanelli's work. And once again this conspicuous absence is very suggestive. Even the great American occult historian Manly P. Hall, who I have quoted from extensively, completely fails to mention Fulcanelli anywhere in any of his work. Why?

The silence suggests a secret. The "mystery" of the cathedrals is the secret of alchemy in the sense that alchemy is an ancient initiatory science. "Fulcanelli" selected his materials carefully to convey in the clearest and most direct manner possible that he did indeed know, he *did indeed* know the secret. Much has been made by the few occultists who have looked into Fulcanelli and his work about the difficulty of his writing. Threading a path through Fulcanelli's minefield of classical allusions is daunting to all but

those who enjoy sampling ancient wisdom for its own sake. Without a key, without the knowledge, the text remains, reading after reading, for most incomprehensible.

However, as in the Sufi story, the greatest treasure is hidden in *plain sight*, as I have told you repeatedly over and over on this broadcast. Fulcanelli slyly directs us with his comment on goetic, or magic art, the magic, or secret, is in the art. He tells you, and yet you don't see it.

Just like the old story of St. George slaying the dragon, all allegorical, all metaphor, and everybody grows up thinking St. George really slew a fire breathing dragon, this big, great, giant dinosaur lizard, killed him with his sword, his lance. And that's not what the story was about at all. The dragon represented the demonic nature, the animalistic desires, cravings and temptations of the base metal, of the baseness in man. When St. George slew the dragon, he slew the evil within himself.

He committed an alchemical act, changed the lead into gold. Why is it a fire breathing dragon? Remember this is a Saint of the Catholic Church, that suppressed knowledge, created the dark ages for hundreds of years, the dark ages was the suppression of knowledge, the suppression of freedom, the demand for conformity upon pain of torture and death or burning at the stake.

The fire represented knowledge, and how do you get knowledge of the base nature? You get it through experience. To have knowledge you must first eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Are you beginning to understand what I'm trying to impart to you? [It is] that most people live, read, breathe, in a fantasy world that does not exist, while all around the truth is displayed *brazenly*, for all to see, but most never, ever see.

The greatest treasure is hidden in plain sight, Fulcanelli slyly directs us with his comments on goetic, or magic art. the magic, the secret, is in the art. what did I tell you about magic in past broadcasts? It is simply the art of illusion. Oh I can see people out there looking at each other. What did he say? What did he say?

Don't worry, it will sink in. You *will* receive the fire. And it may burn your hands, but you're going to get it sooner or later. Like a message in a bottle from the last initiate, the mystery at the core of alchemy surfaced in 1926 when J. Schemit & Co., released its limited edition of *Le Mystere Des Cathedrals*, by an author who calls himself simply, "Fulcanelli." Although apparently well known, at least by reputation to his contemporaries, Fulcanelli's true identity remains uncertain to this day. What is certain is that *Le Mystere Des Cathedrals* created a *sensation* among the Parisian occult community. And it began to work its magic affecting politics, science, and even art.

Without ever being sourced, with no recognition, with only 300 copies in print. That is a phenomenon that *cannot* be overlooked because it is on a magnitude of such great importance, if it had that much influence. From our modern perspective, surfeited on this [he changes newage to age, Ed.] age of wonders, it is hard to see why from the book itself. *Le Mystere* is full of arcane scholarship and obscure erudition, making it difficult to follow the book's symbolic train of thought. In some occult circles this increased its appeal. However, the basic premise of the book, that Gothic cathedrals contain hermetic books in the stone, was an old fashioned idea going back to the 19th century romantics, such as Victor Hugo. How many of you read *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*? Get it. Read it again. And if you don't see what I'm talking about, read it once more.

We will continue this, ladies and gentlemen, tomorrow night, because we are not finished, with the mystery of Fulcanelli. Not finished at all. And for those of you who want to get a jump on everybody else, tonight's broadcast was based on my own research, and from a book called *Monument to the End of Time - Alchemy, Fulcanelli and The Great Cross - The Cross at Hendaye*, by Jay Weidner and Vincent Bridges. I suggest you buy this book, when you read it however, as all esoteric texts, it is meant to convey a message, an esoteric secret message for those who know how to decipher it. It is full of traps, false information for the profane, and for the ignorant. And you could go away from this book with the wrong message. Remember that. But nevertheless buy it and read it, it contains a message worth deciphering, if you have the mind to do it.

Goodnight, God bless each and every single one of you. Goodnight Annie, Pooh and Allison, I love you so very, very much.

Plays Bette Midler - *The Rose*.

Remember just beneath the surface of all of this, is a rose.