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The room was a disaster, with old occult books scattered about and mail-order manuscripts falling apart from their binder. A stack of vintage Rosicrucian Digests lay toppled over in-between other works by G.I. Gurdjieff, and a rare university edition of The Secret Teachings of All Ages sat atop the pile, its value clear to all who saw it. Thumbing through R.A. Schwaller de Lubicz's "Sacred Science", I couldn't help but feel a love for Esoteric Egypt. It was my own personal laboratory, where I could delve into ancient wisdom and explore the mysteries of human history. Even though it wasn't the Library of Alexandria, I felt like I had found something special, yet despite all my reading, I still had a big problem - I wanted more. I would read for hours every night, but then get restless again after a while. As a young entrepreneur, I turned to ancient wisdom teachings to help me succeed in the tough business world. But even with all that knowledge, I couldn't shake the feeling that there was something missing, growing up in Fall River, Massachusetts was not easy. Our educational system wasn't great, and it took me until my early twenties to learn how to tell time on a regular clock. But despite those challenges, I always had a desire to learn more. And when I read my first book, everything changed for me. It gave me the insights I needed to make that mental shift and become a successful entrepreneur, success brought its own set of problems, though. With all the traveling and studying I did, I found myself wanting access to the Manly P Hall Research Library more than ever before. I had heard it was like a treasure trove of esoteric knowledge, and I was determined to get in. But every time I tried to get past the doors to gain entry, I felt frustrated and defeated. The library seemed like a mystery, with its 50,000 volumes of metaphysical books and authors written by Hall himself. I had even made phone calls, sent emails, and bought books from the nearby bookstore in hopes that it would open up for me. Yet sitting outside the building, I saw something beautiful - a Chinese Buddhist stela from the Tang Dynasty, with its intricate carvings and ornate details. It was like a window into another world, one that I longed to enter but couldn't quite crack. Manly P Hall research library was a place where one could connect with the energy of Manly P. Hall's chair behind the doors of the Manly P. Hall research library I was running my usual routine at the nearby bookstore checking through all the vintage Rosicrucian digests making sure that I owned at least one copy of every issue that they had in stock and then I noticed something had changed an honor and a privilege to connect with the energy of Manly P. Hall's chair I moved past the two small fragments of decorated tile inlaid among the flagstones that one should approach with respect as they are original pieces from the floor of Glastonbury abbey adept initiates know that it is within the precincts of Glastonbury that the sacred thorn bush still flourishes near to the grave of King Arthur and then I found myself inside past the doors but this was no Jabba's palace the most interesting thing about the doors to the library are their wood-carved panels the oriental panel is reminiscent of Confucius and its western complement is suggestive of Plato a brilliant touch by the Bavarian wood-carver Stuart Leibchen aka Stuart Holmes finally on the inside this would be my first of many visits to experience the collection of art treasures and rare books the library maintained and what a collection it is Lady of the Serpent Skirt as you enter the research library one can't help but notice the large Aztec wood-carving representing Coatlicue mother of gods I have a strong interest in Mesoamerican culture so this was right up my alley she is a highly important member of the Aztec pantheon and is known as "Lady of the Serpent Skirt" the symbols which adorn her figure represent the earth principle in its two aspects that of the generation of life and that which is the receptacle of the dead the headdress is composed of two serpents facing each other her necklaces are made of human hands and hearts with a pendant skull her kilt is adorned with rattlesnakes and her feet are the claws of a mythical monster that dwells in the seal of Los Angeles lies the Manly P Hall Research Library, a treasure trove of ancient wisdom and mystical knowledge. The inscription on its front reads, "Blending heart and mind towards the eternal as thy goal, realizing the oneness of thy self with the eternal through unified consciousness - man know thyself." Is this a guiding principle for those who seek to unlock the secrets hidden within? The library's existence is not new, having been re-opened to the public in 2016. Yet, it holds the key to understanding that truth lies within oneself. Just like the figure on its shelves, representing the steward who sat at the front door of an Egyptian nobleman, one can find the answers they seek by delving into the mysteries of the universe. The life and works of Manly P Hall serve as a testament to this idea. Born in 1901, Hall spent his life studying mysticism, esoteric philosophies, and their underlying principles. His journey took him from being ordained as a minister in the Church of the People to becoming a renowned philosopher, writer, astrologer, and mystic. Through his writings, such as "The Secret Teachings of All Ages," Hall shared his knowledge with the world. The book remains one of his most notable works, providing insight into the mysteries of existence. In 1934, he founded the Philosophical Research Society in Los Angeles, a testament to his dedication to spreading esoteric knowledge. The story of Manly P Hall's life is filled with remarkable experiences and connections. His birth mother, Louise Antist, was part of the Rosicrucian Fellowship, while his father, William S. Hall, was a dentist. The influence of these families on his early life had a profound impact on his spiritual journey. As one explores the depths of the Manly P Hall Research Library, they may find themselves drawn to the mysteries of alchemy and esotericism. These ancient practices hold secrets that have been hidden for centuries, waiting to be uncovered by those with an open heart and mind. The library's collections include rare books and manuscripts acquired by Hall during his travels. These artifacts serve as a reminder that the pursuit of knowledge is a lifelong journey. The acquisition of these texts was made possible due to economic conditions, yet Hall managed to secure them at below-market prices, demonstrating his ability to find wisdom in unexpected places. The legacy of Manly P Hall continues to inspire those who seek truth and understanding. His life serves as a reminder that the answers we seek may lie within ourselves, waiting to be uncovered by those with an open heart and mind. ===== Manly P. Hall was a well-known and respected figure by 1928, having established himself as an interpreter and lecturer of ancient writings. To promote his book "The Secret Teachings of All Ages," he utilized print and word-of-mouth advertising to raise public funding. The HS Crocker Company in San Francisco agreed to publish the work, provided Hall secured the interest of John Henry Nash, a prominent book designer who had worked with the Vatican. Hall's book caused a significant impact on the metaphysical movement in the United States, challenging societal assumptions and offering new perspectives on spirituality. He argued that ancient symbols and rituals concealed a secret doctrine concerning life's mysteries, which was preserved among a select group of initiated individuals. Hall's work was described as a "gorgeous, dreamlike book" containing mysterious symbols, concise essays, and colorful renderings. In 1988, Hall emphasized the importance of sharing esoteric knowledge with modern society, stating that it should be accessible to everyone, not just limited to small publications. He believed in creating a monument through his work, rather than merely leaving it as a legacy. Following the success of "The Secret Teachings of All Ages," Hall published several books on various subjects, including The Dionysian Artificers and Freemasonry of the Ancient Egyptians. He delivered numerous lectures worldwide, authored over 150 books and essays, and wrote many magazine articles. Hall's work appeared in a 1938 film, where he narrated the story and also provided insight into his astrological views. Hall spoke at Carnegie Hall twice, delivering talks on "The Secret Destiny of America" and "Plato's Prophecy of Worldwide Democracy." His ideas on America's exceptionalism and the role of secret orders in shaping its history influenced President Ronald Reagan's speeches. Despite his influence, little is known about Hall's personal life, particularly regarding his first marriage to Fay B. deRavenne, which ended in her suicide in 1941. The life and works of Manly P. Hall, a renowned spiritual leader and researcher, have left an indelible legacy in the realm of mysticism and esoterica. ===== He married George Bauer in 1927, though their marriage was marked by periods of stress, it proved to be happier than his first.[10] After Marie Schweikert Bauer Hall's demise on 21 April 2005,[3]: 120, 127, 133, 278 The Philosophical Research Society (PRS), an organization he founded in 1934 in Los Angeles, California, continued to operate as a nonprofit dedicated to the study of religion, mythology, metaphysics, and the occult.[11] The PRS still maintains a vast library with over 50,000 volumes,[13] and also publishes and sells spiritual and metaphysical books, mostly authored by Hall.[14] Following his death, some rare alchemy books owned by Hall were sold to keep the PRS operational. In 1995, the acquisition of Manly Palmer Hall's Collection provided the Getty Research Institute with a significant collection of alchemy, esoterica, and hermetica.[15][16] Before becoming affiliated with the Masonic Research Group of San Francisco, Hall was associated with Jewel Lodge No. 374, San Francisco (now the United Lodge), which he joined as a Freemason on 28 June 1954,[17] subsequently receiving his Scottish Rite Degrees and eventually his 32° in the Valley of San Francisco AASR (SJ). Manly Palmer Hall was a Canadian-born mystic, eclectic philosopher who founded the Philosophical Research Society, a modern equivalent of the school of Pythagoras. ===== He was the 20th century's most prolific writer on mysticism, magic, and ancient philosophies. He authored over 200 books and gave more than 8000 lectures, mostly weekly at the headquarters of the Philosophical Research Institute. Hall is best known for his 1928 work The Secret Teachings of All Ages, which introduced ancient symbols and secret traditions to a wide audience. This book remains influential today and is considered one of the most important works of the early twentieth-century American occult revival. Early life Manly Hall was born on March 18, 1901, in Peterborough, Ontario. His parents had separated before he was born, and he lived with his maternal grandmother, Florence Palmer, until she passed away when he was 16. Hall then traveled to California to be with his mother, where he began to develop his interest in mysticism and the occult. He attended a military school and later became involved with self-styled followers of Rosicrucianism in Oceanside, California. He eventually moved to Los Angeles, where he joined metaphysical seekers and discussion groups. Hall's career as a mystic sage began in 1919, when he reunited with his mother in California. Throughout his life, Hall was recognized for his expertise in the occult and received several honors, including the Grand Cross of Scottish Rite Freemasonry, Southern Jurisdiction, Washington, D.C., in 1985. Theosophical Society connections were pivotal in Manly Hall's life, as he came under the influence of its teachings during his time in California. He began his public career in 1920, delivering a series of lectures on reincarnation, and later became a lifelong admirer of H.P. Blavatsky and her Secret Doctrine. Hall was heavily engaged with the Theosophical Society and lectured at various lodges across the United States. His books were distributed by the organization, and its members studied them in lodge meetings and listened to his lectures on recordings. Hall was extremely devoted to Blavatsky's work, considering it unique and remarkable within the field of related literature. He believed that many of her remarks, which were once controversial, are now widely accepted. The Secret Teachings of All Ages, Hall's magnum opus, was published in 1928 and has since become a classic of occult literature. The book, illustrated with 54 original plates by J. Augustus Knapp, is still widely read and influential today. Its success catapulted Hall into the national spotlight, making it a comprehensive codex that took the world of myth and symbol on its own terms. Manly Hall: A Spiritual Philanthropist Ignored within Academia ===== Hall clarified ancient ideas that could otherwise seem beyond reach, writing not as a distant judge but as a lover of the rites and mysteries embodied in the old ways. This approach upset him because esoteric and occult teachings had no place in American universities. He decided to establish his own spiritual center in Los Angeles with the mission to teach "practical idealism" preserved in over 100,000 wonder-texts of antiquity. The Philosophical Research Society purchased a prime piece of real estate overlooking Los Feliz Boulevard in 1934. On October 17th, about 100 people assembled to break ground for their new headquarters. PRS provided a cloistered setting where Hall spent the rest of his life teaching, writing, and assembling a remarkable collection of antique texts and devotional objects. The campus eventually grew to include a fifty-thousand-volume library, an auditorium, bookstore, warehouse, office, and courtyard. However, following Hall's death, the nonprofit organization faced significant financial challenges due to a \$2 million legal debt from lawsuits involving his widow and an eccentric art collector. Despite these difficulties, PRS regained fiscal health in 1993 and continued to print different editions of the "Great Book". Today, PRS offers various programs, including lectures, online courses, workshops, wellness classes, concerts, and special events. Manly P. Hall died on August 29, 1990, at an age of 61, due to complications from his obesity and poor health. ===== He had lost the use of his thyroid glands when he was young, which might have contributed to his weight gain. His eyesight was severely impaired, making it difficult for him to perform daily tasks such as reading mail. His joints ached with arthritis, forcing him to constantly visit doctors and take numerous medications. In the late 1980s, Hall's personal judgment seemed to deteriorate, leading him to transfer control of his affairs to a self-proclaimed healer named Daniel Fritz. The body of work published by Manly P. Hall continues to be a valuable resource for those interested in the esoteric sciences. Among his notable publications include The Initiates of the Flame, which was first published in 1922 and explores the principles of initiation and spiritual growth. Manly Hall's Occult Legacy: A Collection in Peril The Manly P. Hall Alchemy collection was at risk of being broken up and sold to private collectors, but instead, the GRI has made it accessible to a broad audience through digitization and collaboration with the Internet Archive. Geraldine Beskin has written extensively on Manly Hall's life and teachings, but some researchers still view the collection as primarily occult. They argue that physical access to the items is necessary to fully understand their metaphysical significance. Mitch Horowitz's book "Occult America" explores the history of mysticism in the United States, including the influence of Theosophy on Manly Hall's work. He notes that Hall's teachings were not limited to his books, but also included personal lectures and writings. Wouter J. Hanegraaff has written a comprehensive dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism, which includes entries on Manly P. Hall and his contributions to the field. In recent years, there have been concerns about the preservation and accessibility of rare book collections. The GRI's efforts to digitize the Manly P. Hall Alchemy collection and make it available online are a welcome development. Despite these efforts, some researchers continue to view the collection as primarily occult. They argue that physical access to the items is necessary to fully understand their metaphysical significance. This perspective is reflected in Walter Benjamin's concept of the uniqueness of a work of art being embedded in the context of tradition and ritual. In contrast, digital duplication and contextualization of the manuscripts and rare books through the lens of art history may obscure rather than reveal their occult significance. As such, it remains to be seen whether the GRI's efforts will be enough to preserve Manly P. Hall's legacy for future generations. References: [1] John Michael Greer, The Occult Book. (New York: Sterling, 2017), 179. [2] Geraldine Beskin, "Manly Hall, the Murdered Mystic". International Theosophical History Conference. September 20 and 21, 2014. Accessed on 12/12/19. [3] Mitch Horowitz, Occult America: The Secret History of How Mysticism Shaped Our Nation. (New York: Random House, Inc., 2009), 150-151. [4] Gary Lachman, Revolutionaries of the Soul. Reflections on Magicians, Philosophers, and Occultists. (Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Books, 2014), 90. [5] Wouter J. Hanegraaff, Dictionary of Gnosis & Western Esotericism Volume 1, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Koninklijke Brill, 2005), 455. [6] Anonymous advertisement, "An Encyclopedic Outline of Masonic, Hermetic, and Rosicrucian Symbolic Philosophy by Manly P. Hall" Theosophical Messenger 16.7 (December, 1928), 156. [7] Anonymous book review, "The Secret Destiny of America" The American Theosophist 33.4 (April 1945), 97. In order to preserve the occult value of objects through physical accessibility without compromising their delicate nature, the GRI has implemented a judicious approach. Digitization and limited access ensure long-term preservation, aligning with the organization's explicit goal. However, there is an underlying responsibility to explore the mystical reality embodied in Manly P. Hall's collection, although this challenge stems from the intersection of occult and art historical research perspectives. Institutions like the Bibliotheca Philosophica Hermetica and The Ritman Library have successfully integrated these two visions of research, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. These institutions' approaches can serve as a model for future endeavors. Manly P. Hall's entry into collecting alchemical and occult materials was facilitated by his successful publication, The Secret Teachings. This work resonated with the zeitgeist of the time, granting him access to exclusive circles of celebrity. However, without this success, there would be no Hall, and without the acquired resources, there would be no Secret Teachings. Hall's reliance on external funding was crucial in his pursuit of knowledge. Caroline and Estelle Lloyd, a mother-daughter duo with significant wealth, provided essential financial support for his research endeavors. Their involvement not only enabled Hall to acquire rare books and manuscripts but also influenced the development of the wisdom library at Philosophical Research Society. The relationship between benefactor and curator raises questions regarding ownership and intent. As the Lloyds' donations significantly contributed to Hall's research and collection, it is essential to reevaluate the boundaries of ownership and purpose in such contexts. Shouldn't there be multiple ontological modes of curation and handling for the occult, similar to how there are for indigenous cultural artifacts in archives? Shouldn't the GRI make exceptions to view the physical holding over the digital when it's considered a ritualistic act to commune with the aura of the object? What claims does the "repatriation" of occult materials merit when viewed as religious artifacts, especially when they are so closely tied to a cultural center such as the PRS? Shouldn't the Manly P Hall Alchemy Archive be channeled to the Caroine and Estelle Lloyd Archive? These questions that we may need to ask ourselves as professionals when new frameworks of ownership, religion, curation, and audience emerge on the horizon. Notwithstanding, the Manly P Hall Alchemy archive remains one of the most uniquely occult collections in Los Angeles and worthy of further study in whatever capacity.

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