



The Gurdjieff Years  
1929–1949  
Recollections  
of  
Louise Goepfert March

*Expanded Edition*

By Annabeth McCorkle



**Winter 1930-31 Louise Goepfert**

**The  
Gurdjieff Years  
1929-1949**

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EUREKA EDITIONS 2012

First edition published in 1990 by The Work Study Association, Inc., Walworth, New York.

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 90-070434

ISBN 9626729-0-4

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"An Introduction to *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, containing some suggestions as to the right method for reading Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*" by Louise March was previously published in *The Rochester Years 1957-1987 The Work of Louise March* by Annabeth McCorkle. © 2007 Annabeth W McCorkle.

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ISBN: 978-90-72395-78-8

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Truth Seekers Chicago

*For the next generations*

The living essence of Gurdjieffs teaching will never be found in a book, but attentive readers may discover clues which will help in the pursuit of Truth.



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LOUISE GOEPFERT MARCH was G. I. Gurdjieffs student, secretary, and the translator of the German edition of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. Her association with him lasted from 1929 until his death in 1949. She devoted the rest of her life to the transmission of his teaching. In 1957, authorized by Lord Pentland and initially assisted by Christopher Fremantle, Mrs. March established Gurdjieff work groups in Rochester, New York. During the next ten years, she traveled monthly from her home in New York City to Rochester, where she trained her students in the practical application of Gurdjieffs ideas. In 1967 Mrs. March founded a craft community, the Rochester Folk Art Guild. She became well known as the vigorous matriarch and teacher of this unique expression of the principles of Gurdjieff Mrs. March's legacy also includes Stillwood Study Center, which carries on her work under the direction of people prepared by her for this purpose. Louise March died in November 1987.

ANNABETH MCCORKLE first met Louise March in 1963 in Rochester, New York, when she joined Mrs. March's group studying the ideas and practices of Gurdjieff. In 1978 Mrs. McCorkle and her husband established their primary connection with Lord Pentland at the Gurdjieff Foundation of New York, although their relationship with Mrs. March continued until her death. Mrs. McCorkle and her husband co-founded Stillwood Study Center where she continues to lead groups and movements in the Gurdjieff tradition. Mrs. McCorkle is the author of *A Pair of Warm Socks: Five Spiritual Journeys; Finding a Way; Essays on Spiritual Practice*, and *The Rochester Years 1957-1987: The Work of Louise March*. She has also written a children's book, *The Kramurg*.



## **A Brief Chronology of Louise Goepfert March's life as recounted in *The Gurdjieff Years***

- 1900-1925 Louise Goepfert's birth & childhood in Switzerland and Germany. Attended Berlin University.
- 1926-1929 Post-graduate study in art history at Smith College in the United States. Worked at the Opportunity Gallery in New York City. Taught art history at Hunter College.
- 1929 Met G. I. Gurdjieff in New York City. Traveled to Prieure to translate *Beelzebubs Tales to His Grandson* into German.
- 1930 (Feb-April) 1st trip to the United States with Gurdjieff.
- 1930 (Nov)-1931 (Mar) 2nd trip to the United States with Gurdjieff.
- 1931 (April-Nov) Traveled in the United States, Japan, and China before returning to Gurdjieff at the Prieure.
- 1931 (Nov)-1932 (Jan) 3rd trip to the United States with Gurdjieff.
- 1932 After Prieure closed, returned to Germany.
- 1933 Married Walter March, settled in Berlin. Visited there by Gurdjieff
- 1936 Moved with her family to the United States.
- 1939 Visited with Gurdjieff during his final pre-war trip to the United States.
- 1939-1948 As homemaker and mother of five children, lived on Spring Farm in Bloomingburg, New York.
- 1948 (Dec)-1949 (Feb) Gurdjieff's last visit to the United States.
- 1949 At Gurdjieff's request, traveled to Europe to

supervise the publication of the German  
edition of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.

1949 (October 29) Gurdjieff's death.

Publication of German edition of *In Search of  
the Miraculous* co-translated by Louise March.

1950 Publication of German edition of *All und Alles*.  
Wrote and published pamphlet, *G. Gurdjieff:  
A Call for Attention to His Life and Work*.

## Preface to the Expanded Edition

Within a few months of the 1990 publication of *The Gurdjieff Years: 1929-1949, Recollections of Louise March*, it was clear that I had underestimated the demand for the book. After the five hundred copies of the initial printing had been sold, requests for copies of the book continued to arrive from all over the world.

During the 1990s, *The Gurdjieff Years* was cited numerous times in other books about Gurdjieff. People who wanted to read the entire book were unable to obtain copies. Some people made photocopies of the text for their friends—sometimes with the permission of the copyright holder but more often without. Worse were the scanned versions which exhibited a quality of text a far cry from Louise March's high standards. As time passed, used copies, selling for upwards of ten times the original list price, appeared on the Internet and in catalogues dedicated to books about Gurdjieff and his teaching.

In response to continuing requests, I decided to reissue the book. Initially, I thought only to correct the few typographical errors in the original text. When additional material became available, I decided to include it in order to enrich the reader's knowledge of Louise Goepfert March's experience with Gurdjieff. This book is the result.

The main additions to this expanded edition are excerpts of primary source letters written by Louise Goepfert to Alfons Paquet between 1929 and 1931 describing her early impressions of Gurdjieff and her German translation of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. All these letters were dated and written in German. After they were translated into English, I, in consultation with

## *The Gurdjieff Years: 1929-1949*

the translator, made minor changes to conform to colloquial English. Every effort was made to remain faithful to the original material, but I take full responsibility for any errors in meaning that may have crept in.

Besides the letters, there is supplemental data that clarifies Louise Goepfert March's relationship with Gurdjieff and her role in the publication of the German editions of both *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* and *In Search of the Miraculous* and a brief chronology of her life as recounted in *The Gurdjieff Years*. In an appendix are two poems written by her that flowed from her time with Gurdjieff; her essay about *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* which includes "suggestions as to the right method of reading Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*"; and an amended version of the Preface to the 1990 edition of *The Gurdjieff Years* entitled "Writing *The Gurdjieff Years* with Louise March." There are also more photographs and an index.

Among the editing changes in this edition, the spellings of Galumnian and Svetchnikoff were changed to conform to James Moore's usage in his 1991 biography of Gurdjieff. Also, several paragraphs relating to the March children, which do not contribute to the reader's understanding of Gurdjieff or Louise March, were revised or removed.

There are also some formatting changes in the expanded edition. The bibliographic footnotes have been replaced with endnotes. Within the body of the text, Louise March's own explanatory notes remain in parentheses, and my clarifying comments are set within brackets. Direct quotes from Louise March's notes, letters, and journals—for which I have hard copy—are italicized. The rest of the text was based on my interviews

## *Preface to the Expanded Edition*

with Louise March during the summer and fall of 1987. The tapes of these talks remain in my possession.

The publication of both editions of *The Gurdjieff Years* was the result of many people's efforts. I gladly acknowledge a few of the myriad sources of help. Working with men and women who shared a commitment to publish a written record of Mrs. March's memories of Gurdjieff has been a truly rewarding experience. To all the people who helped, whether mentioned by name or not, I am most grateful.

The expanded edition of *The Gurdjieff Years* was greatly enriched by the dedicated efforts of Niko Papastefanou, a native German speaker thoroughly conversant with English. It was he who first alerted me to the existence of the Louise Goepfert-Alfons Paquet letters. Niko secured copies of these letters, and, after deciphering Louise Goepfert's sometimes-hard-to-read handwriting in "old German," he translated the letters into English with insight and sensitivity.

Niko provided other documents which confirmed and clarified Louise March's memories of various events mentioned in the book. He facilitated the securing of the necessary permissions for the inclusion of certain written material and images in this edition. Although I have never met Niko, I consider him a friend and partner in this endeavor. Without him, this book would have been little more than a reissue of the 1990 edition.

When Louise March and I were preparing the material for the 1990 edition of *The Gurdjieff Years*, she once remarked wistfully in the poetic imagery that characterized her speech, "So far we only have the snakeskin. Where is the life—the snake itself?" If these letters, as I hope, supply at least a bit of the "snake itself," is due in large measure to Niko.

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Niko in his turn, and I indirectly, are grateful to Dr. Oliver Piecha, the author of a forthcoming authoritative biography of Alfons Paquet, who initially directed Niko to the collection of letters in the literary estate of Alfons Paquet. I happily acknowledge a deep appreciation to Mrs. Raschida Mansour of the Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg of Frankfurt am Main for her help in making the Goepfert-Paquet letters available for research and translation and for permission to include an image of a portion of one of the original letters in this book.

Gratitude is also due to Mr. Thomas Matyk at MAK (Austrian Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna) for arranging permission to include the image of Joseph Binder's design of the dust jacket for the 1950 German edition of *All und Alles*. I thank Charles van Home for his help in regard to the photographs of Gurdjieff and his "family" taken during the winter of 1930-1931 by his great aunt, Tony von Horn. I am appreciative that the Rochester Folk Art Guild gave permission for the inclusion of a photograph of Mrs. March as well as two of her poems.

I remain grateful to the archivists of both Smith and Hunter Colleges for their assistance in locating and providing documents pertaining to Louise Goepfert used first in the 1990 edition of *The Gurdjieff Years*. I acknowledge with thanks Smith College's permission to quote from President William Allan Neilson's letter about her.

In response to the 1990 edition, George Baker and Joe Rosensteil wrote thoughtful letters with specific ideas for improving the book. Their corrections and many of their suggestions have been incorporated into this edition. Tom Daly, in a long letter, generously shared his own struggles

## *Preface to the Expanded Edition*

and work during the compilation of material for the de Hartmann book, *Our Life with Mr. Gurdjieff*, and for the publication of the Gurdjieff - de Hartmann music. He hoped his experience would help me, and it did. Jack Cain provided additional data about the philological background of *Beelzebub's Tales*. Elizabeth Evans strongly and frequently encouraged me to reissue *The Gurdjieff Years*.

Paul Schliffer and Michael Hunter of the Rochester Folk Art Guild contributed input and support as well. Sylvia March, as the representative of Louise March's family, shared her perspective on the material. Maria Lennig (nee Goepfert) elaborated on Louise March's memories of their childhood in Switzerland and Germany.

Several members of Stillwood Study Center helped: Elizabeth Rowe and Mary Jo Pace, with editing; Brian Orner with conversion of the tapes of my 1987 talks with Louise March to digital files.

Prior to the publication of the 1990 edition of *The Gurdjieff Years*, Michel de Salzmann, Mme. Pauline de Dampierre, and Paul Reynard made useful recommendations. Peggy Flinsch, on her own initiative, flew to Rochester to discuss the book with me. Our conversation helped to clarify my intentions. Several members of the Gurdjieff Foundation of California, particularly Fredrica Parlett and Henry Jacobson, proposed numerous editorial changes which contributed to a better book. Numerous members of The Work Study Association (now Stillwood Study Center) provided technical support. Judith Mallinson, Carol Kerner, Linda Lindenfelser, and Judith Maloney assisted in editorial and research matters. Leslie Light was responsible for graphic design, and Barry Perlus for photographic reproduction and advice.

*The Gurdjieff Years: 1929-1949*

Finally, I gratefully acknowledge the unwavering support of my husband, Mac, through both editions of this book.

Annabeth Waddell McCorkle  
November 2011

# Introduction

*"Du bist der dunkle, Unbewusste,"* wrote Rilke. "You are the dark one, hard to recognize." <sup>1</sup>

Throughout my childhood in Switzerland and Germany in the early part of the twentieth century, I lived with an expectation that one day I would meet a great man. I imagined finding him in exotic circumstances—in the Himalayas or at Fujiyama. In a sense, I was waiting for I knew not whom. I stayed away from people. I didn't crave the world.

Then there came a period in New York City when my childhood ideals became dim. Striving to make a place for myself in the world seemed to be paramount for me. I held two jobs. I was drawn into the social life of glamorous New York. Only material possessions seemed worth working for. I wanted to find a millionaire.

Yet the expectancy remained that I was to meet a great man one day. The fulfillment of this expectation came, not where I had dreamed, but here in America in 1929 when I met George Ivanovitch Gurdjieff. He called me to serve him and his mission. I recognized him as the great one I had anticipated. And everything changed.



## Chapter 1

# Preparation

My earliest years were spent in Switzerland where I was born on August 30, 1900. Our family lived in a big house, one of several occupied by people employed at the spinning mill where my father was treasurer.

From the beginning, nature was important to me. We climbed the snow-capped Jura Mountains between Switzerland and Germany with every guest who visited our family. My sister Maria, three years younger than I, was usually carried up the mountain by one of the adults, but I always got to the top on my own power. Later, in Germany, Maria and I accompanied our father on walks through the woods near our apartment and on the Taunus, the ridge of hills west of Frankfurt. My father liked to have his daughters with him on these expeditions.

My father was a gentle man who loved theater and art. It was said that before he married my mother he used to go to the theater every day. As a result of his influence, we often visited the Stadel Museum of Painting and the Liebieghaus Museum of Sculpture.

In our family the male force came more from my mother than from my father. Of the two, she was the stronger. She was a practical woman who spent much of her time doing "good works" in our church and community. She was also very demanding.

I was always trying to please my mother, but it was impossible. Once I thought I would surprise her by doing her ironing while she was gone, but just before she left the house she said to me, "You might do my ironing while I'm gone."

Once a girl from my class told her mother that I had broken her earring. When the girl's mother complained

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to my mother, she accepted my classmate's story without question. When I told her the truth, that I hadn't broken the earring, she didn't believe me. I couldn't forgive her for that.

It was characteristic of my mother to be very critical. Even when I was an adult, after I had done postgraduate work at Smith College, she objected to my makeup and how I wore my hair with bangs on my forehead.

As a child I felt myself a stranger within my own family. I still remember my mother saying to me, "You should have been born into another family." After meeting her while visiting Frankfurt in the early 1930s, Mr. Gurdjieff said, "How possible such daughter have such mother, such mother have such daughter? I take pity, take daughter into my family."

During that same visit he examined all the pictures in her house very carefully. He paid particular attention to a painting of my other sister—an angelic blond who died at two after suffering a long illness. What did he see in that?

When I was seven years old and about to enter school, a young girl was murdered in the nearby town where the school was located. My parents decided Switzerland was not safe, so we moved to Frankfurt, Germany, where we took a large apartment close to the Main River. Maria and I were enrolled in a very good private school run by nuns.

The move to Frankfurt was not a felicitous one. Throughout the rest of my childhood, I heard the refrain, "If only we had stayed in Switzerland."

In Germany, my father joined his family's business, an old wine house in Wurzburg that produced Bocksbeutel. [The distinctive squat green flagon of Bocksbeutel (literally "goat's bag") has been a symbol of fine Franconian wine since 1726.] He was very successful exporting the German wine to Russia. He became known for his ability

## Preparation

to taste a wine and tell what year it was made and where the grapes were grown. When World War I began, even though he was already in his forties, my father was drafted into the German army. Being of delicate constitution, he suffered terribly during the war and nearly lost his mind.

I was a lonesome child with no friends other than my sister Maria. I thought she took after our mother; I, after our father. Maria and I were very different but we got along well. She both washed and dried the dishes while I read stories and poetry aloud to her. With dramatic flourish I read *Medea* and the other tragedies that were our favorites.

I lived in a world of fairy tales, legends, and myths where suffering kings and sacrifices for noble causes were common. To find the Grail and partake in the communion with it was my childhood's greatest desire. I was enchanted by Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival* and by Wagner's operatic version, *Parsifal*, particularly the image of the Grail held in the air by angels until an appropriate guardian came along. I felt deeply about Amfortas, the knight who guarded the Grail and suffered from a bleeding wound. In these German versions of the Grail myth, Parzifal, obeying his training not to ask questions out of idle curiosity, did not ask Amfortas the compassionate question, "Whence is your wound?" I was almost sure I would have. At least I would have suffered with Amfortas.

My strong Catholic upbringing made the Christian story vivid and real to me. I often wished I had lived when Jesus walked this earth. Even as a young child, I envied Mary Magdalene, salving His feet and drying them with her hair. Stoic Mary under the cross seemed incomprehensible to me. Mary Magdalene in passionate

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grief was much more understandable. During my early adolescence I wanted to enter a convent as Christ's bride, wishing to perfect myself to come nearer to Him.

In my late teens I became disenchanted with the Catholic Church. With interest and respect I read *The Mahabharata*, the Indian epic of man and life and the gods. I became acquainted with a delightful Hindu family. I couldn't accept the Catholic Church's position that these good people were "unsaved." For its judgment of others, I judged the Church.

As to earthly love, I woke up late. I felt that the usual man-woman relationship was too limited. Ordinary men did not attract me. I was only interested in men who had ideas living in them.

The impulse to help others was active in me very early in life. No doubt this came from my mother. When I was in Catholic school, I was the chaplain of the class. Whenever difficulties arose with the other students, I was responsible for taking those involved to the nuns. Usually the problems were straightened out. Later the art gallery that I ran in New York was also part of that fate to help others. I introduced many poor artists, whose talents were as yet unrecognized, to wealthy patrons.

Now, in my eighties, I think helping people to discover who they are is the only help of real worth. And yet Mr. Gurdjieff gave material assistance to many old Russians and family members stranded in a foreign land in difficult times. How can you not help if you are human?

## Chapter 2

# The Proposal

After attending the University of Frankfurt, I began studying at the University of Berlin. One day in 1925 Dr. Max Dessoir, my philosophy professor [and aesthetics theorist], suggested I apply for the new International Student Exchange Program. He said, "I don't want to lose you as a student, but I thought it might be good for you. You haven't looked well since your mother's recent illness. Would you like to go to America for a year? May I give your name to Dr. Werner Picht, who represents the program here in Europe?"

I said, "Of course, yes."

Almost a year later, when I had nearly forgotten about the program, I was notified that I was to leave for the United States in a few weeks. When the news came, I was on the Riviera in the company of two editors of a Berlin newspaper. I started crying. "I never really wanted to go to America. I only agreed to go because my professor said it would be good for me." My companions told me that I shouldn't pass up this great opportunity. And so, I gathered my courage and left for America. It was September 1926. I was twenty-six years old.

I spent the year doing postgraduate work in art history at Smith College in Massachusetts. The following summer, as a result of a recommendation by Smith's president, Dr. William Allan Neilson, I chaperoned a group of young people on an art tour of Europe.

[A letter, dated February 12, 1927, from Dr. Neilson to William Carlisle says in part: "Miss Goepfert speaks both French and German and has a knowledge of Europe which would make her a valuable chaperone of one of your parties. She is a student of art and knows a great deal about art and architecture."<sup>2</sup>]

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As one of a handful of foreign students at Smith, I was somewhat of a celebrity and much in demand for all sorts of functions. A special fund was established which enabled me to travel within the United States during vacations.

On one of these trips I wandered into Alfred Stieglitz's gallery in New York City. Stieglitz took an instant liking to me, perhaps because I was German, and he remembered having his best time of learning and studying in Berlin. When I was leaving, he urged me, "Come back soon. You must meet Miss O'Keeffe." The next time I visited, I met Georgia O'Keeffe and saw an exhibit other paintings. I recognized the significance of her art immediately. O'Keeffe and Stieglitz were pleased that my opinion differed markedly from that of Maier-Grafe, the best-known German art critic of that time. He thought her work was merely decorative.

I left the gallery with O'Keeffe who was dressed in her customary white and black clothes and flat-heeled shoes.

I still remember her long stride and my pleasure in walking with her. We fitted well together. O'Keeffe and I became friends, meeting at least once a year until her death in 1986.<sup>3</sup>

In the year following our first meeting, O'Keeffe helped me establish myself in New York City. She found a job for me at the Opportunity Gallery, a gallery for mostly young, unknown artists who had not yet had one-man shows. Smith President Neilson also helped by arranging a position for me on the faculty of Hunter College in the art department. Between 1927 and 1929, I taught classes on the history of Renaissance and modern painting, and in sculpture.

Time passed. I became well established in the New

## *The Proposal*

York "scene." I was included in a certain circle of artists and writers who used to gather at the house of the three Stettheimer sisters. There was Eti, who was the first American woman with a German doctorate in philosophy, a writer, and friend of the publisher Alfred Knopf; Florene, who was a very distinguished painter; and Carrie, who built a doll house that is now in the Museum of the City of New York.

The Stettheimer parties usually started at nine o'clock at night. The guests were always extraordinarily well dressed, in fashionable evening clothes. At one of these parties I was introduced to Mr. A. R. Orage about whom I had heard from Carl Zigrosser, the director of the Weyhe Gallery. I said to Orage, "Aren't you the person who reads that special book by a man whose name I can't quite pronounce?"

He said, "Yes. Gurdjieff is his name. If you're interested, I'll put you on my list. When we start reading again, you'll be invited."

After this exchange with Orage, the evening dragged on as it always did at those parties. Lobster was to be served but not until after midnight. Quite a while before that, Orage returned to me and said, "I wonder, would you like to come with me now? I'm supposed to be in Carnegie Hall, listening to Mr. de Hartmann play Gurdjieff's music."

I thought about it quickly and said, "Yes." I experienced a slight regret that the lobster hadn't come yet.

Orage and I walked the short distance from the Stettheimers' apartment building to Carnegie Hall and then rode the elevator up to one of its many studios. We entered a room full of smoke and the most penetrating piano music I had ever heard. When Orage joined Gurdjieff in the front of the room, I sat down in the barest empty seat.

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I could barely see Gurdjieff through the haze, but I could hear him shout at Orage for being so late. When Gurdjieff stopped shouting, Mr. de Hartmann started to play the piano again. Deeply impressed, I listened intently. What can I say about the *other-ness* of the Gurdjieff-de Hartmann music? It went into me differently, not automatically.

When the music ended, Mr. Gurdjieff took Orage under his whip again. Music continued to alternate with bouts of shouting. I disliked all the smoke and uproar, so I quietly left the studio and rang for the elevator.

After a long wait, the elevator came. As I stepped inside, I felt something like lightning piercing me from behind. I turned around. There was Mr. Gurdjieff. He entered the elevator. The doors closed behind us.

"You here?" he said.

I thought, What a question! Of course I'm here.

"Where go? What do?" he asked.

"Oh," I said smiling, "I'm going back to a very interesting party. Writers, painters—the intelligentsia of New York. Do come along."

My job at the Opportunity Gallery had taught me the American skill of being a "good mixer." I thought I could use this facility to persuade Mr. Gurdjieff to return with me to the Stettheimers' party. What a feather in my cap that would be! Mr. Gurdjieff looked interested and I was hopeful.

We stepped out of the elevator on the ground floor. We were just about to walk down the eight steps in front of Carnegie Hall when Mr. Gurdjieff put his hand on my shoulder.

"Now, stop," he said. "People wait me, not can go. Ch...Ch...il...ds. Where C h i l d s ?" He pronounced the name of the restaurant with the greatest difficulty, almost pain.

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"Well," I said, "there are two Childs. One on Columbus Circle and one on Fifth Avenue. Which one?"

"Fi-.Fif... Fifth Avenue," he stuttered. Pressing my arm slightly, he asked, "Where?"

Mr. Gurdjieff gave the impression of being a helpless stranger lost in the big city. He was such a good actor that I was fully convinced he could not find his way without me as his guide. I even *wished* to be his guide.

We walked slowly along 57th Street toward Fifth Avenue. Mr. Gurdjieff's steps were firm, his feet pointed outward, his arms crossed behind his back. He walked like no one else.

"What you do? Where you come from?" he asked. In the two long blocks between Carnegie Hall and Childs he drew forth almost everything about me. He seemed particularly pleased when I told him that I had two jobs and was supporting my mother.

As I was talking, I noticed we were walking past Henri Bendel, the store where the Stettheimer sisters bought their elegant clothes. The display of fashionable evening gowns in the store window attracted my attention, for I wanted to be elegant too.

Mr. Gurdjieff followed my gaze to the store window. With a flick of his wrist, he indicated the insignificance of such values. His gesture made such an impression on me that I felt that my attraction to fashion and elegance was only outward. Inwardly I didn't care a bit.

When we got to Childs Restaurant, the hatcheck girl took his Russian cap with delight and reverence. He walked deliberately toward a group of people crowded around two tables that had been pushed together. All faces turned toward me. Mr. Gurdjieff pulled out a chair for me, sat down with his back to the rest of the people, and faced me. We continued to talk.

When Gurdjieff mentioned his rich wine cellar in the Prieure, his chateau in Avon near Fontainebleau, France, I paid close attention because of my father's connection with wine. As I listened to Mr. Gurdjieff, I had the clear impression that he and I were far away from everyone else, that only I could hear what he was saying. It suddenly struck me, How does he speak? In what language? Do I understand? Where am I? I felt that while there was something in me that was listening, it wasn't anything in my body. When Mr. Gurdjieff finally turned to talk to the other people, I excused myself and left.

Back on the street again I felt just as confused as Mr. Gurdjieff had appeared to be in front of Carnegie Hall. I had to stop. Then I saw the choice. To the left was the party and the lobster—representing all that my recent life in New York had meant. To the right was the hotel where I had a quiet room—representing an unknown and yet more real possibility. I turned right.

For the rest of the night I felt struck, transported, even transformed. I could not sleep for the inner questioning that had begun—the kind of questioning that must happen to all people who have such good fortune. What is life? Why are you here? You like New York because of its richness and splendor! Aren't you an upstart? On and on it went until morning. The next day I felt better than if I had slept.

That evening I had been invited out by friends of the Stettheimers to the Architectural League, where I often attended dinners, dances, or lectures. My hosts, the Kaisers, were patrons of my gallery. He was a sculptor and she an interior decorator. They picked me up in their car. As we were nearing Childs, I suddenly said, "Oh please, stop a minute I must see someone in Childs."

I left the Kaisers in the car and went inside to find Mr.

## *The Proposal*

Gurdjieff. I felt very proud of the light coral velvet evening coat I was wearing. I hoped Gurdjieff would be impressed by it.

Mr. Gurdjieff was writing, seated at a table. When I reached him, he looked up.

"Sit!" he said.

"Oh, no," I said, "I'm going out. I can't."

"Why then come?"

"I came to tell you I didn't sleep. Everything's changed." Then I ran back to join the Kaisers.

One afternoon a few weeks later, I went to the Russian Tea Room on 57th Street. It was simpler then, just a tea room frequented by writers and musicians. Mr. Gurdjieff was sitting at a table. I greeted him joyously and was amazed at the reception I got. He looked up, took his glasses off, pretending not to know me, as if searching in his memory. Then he seemed to place me. "Ah, yes, remember. Once I forgive. Not second time."

I was shocked. "Forgive? Forgive what?"

"*You* not even remember. I wait. I wait you, Childs, next day. Why not come?"

I broke out in a sweat. The floor underneath me seemed to give way. I thought, "I have no memory of such an agreement. And yet he speaks with such authority, he must be right. Had he said it and I didn't understand? Had he made a date and I hadn't come? But wouldn't I have come if I had known?" It was torture, torture for years. But then I would remember, "Once, only once I forgive!"

From the Russian Tea Room we walked together to his apartment on 59th Street and Central Park South where I watched him prepare supper. Everything tasted unusual and very good. I was somewhere in *The Thousand and One sights*. The other people who had gathered for the meal

mattered little to me—except for Olga de Hartmann, who talked a lot and seemed to disapprove of me. She asked me which group I came from, but I didn't know what she meant.

During the time I had been in New York, I had become great friends with Alexander and Gela Archipenko from Berlin. Every evening, if I wasn't otherwise engaged, I dined with them, either at their home or at a restaurant. One day Gela said, "Someone from my youth, from Marchstrasse in Charlottenburg, is coming. Please help me entertain him." The guest was Walter March, a young architect.

Soon after that evening, I had a luncheon engagement with Walter at Childs. When we arrived, Mr. Gurdjieff waved us over to eat with him at his table. Mr. Gurdjieff was commander of the meal. When it was over, he left a very generous tip. I liked that. As we were leaving the restaurant, the hatcheck girl said to me, "Ah! You go out with that man?" She indicated Mr. Gurdjieff. "He must be a millionaire."

Mr. Gurdjieff suggested that I come to a reading of his book, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. I told him I was lecturing in the evenings at Hunter College so I couldn't be there at the time the reading was scheduled to begin. "Then come when can," he said. "But telephone Mme. de Hartmann. Where held I not know."

I telephoned and telephoned. When she asked again which group I was in or said that she didn't know yet where the meeting would be, I persisted. I kept knocking until the door was opened.

The next Monday evening, after I finished teaching at Hunter College in Brooklyn, I took the subway to Manhattan. I went directly to Muriel Draper's studio where the reading was to be held. As I entered the

crowded room, Mr. Gurdjieff interrupted the reader, "Enough, enough."

He showed me to a big, red, high-backed chair. Everyone looked at me as I sat down next to him. I felt very much in the spotlight.

Mr. Gurdjieff said, "Very important. Another chapter." Someone started to read the last chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales*, "Mountain Pass," now called "The Result of Impartial Mentation." During the reading, Gurdjieff sat and watched me full force. I had ears all over. I was overcome, overwhelmed. I felt the truth of it all.

Later I lay awake all night, vibrant with the power of the book's imagery. The cosmic procession of the Egolionopti intermingled with the more-felt-than-seen ideals of my childhood. I touched a very rare, unearthly state. I am thankful to *Beelzebub's Tales* for that blessed, sleepless night.

From then on, I saw much more of Gurdjieff. I was often invited either for luncheon at Childs, which was just a block from my gallery on 56th Street, or for a reading and dinner at his apartment.

Mr. Gurdjieff said he wanted me to read a part of the German translation of *Beelzebub's Tales* to a small group of German-speaking people, among them the Swiss Consul General, Mr. Robert J. F. Schwarzenbach. I had met the impressive Mr. Schwarzenbach before, when I inquired about being admitted to the United States on a permanent basis.

As soon as everybody had arrived, Mr. Gurdjieff asked me to read. "Clearly, each word equal!" he said.

The German translation I read was old-fashioned and sometimes queer-sounding. It had been done by old Russians who had meticulously followed Mr. Gurdjieff's injunction, "Word for word. Right order."

*The Gurdjieff Years: 1929-1949*

While we were drinking Turkish coffee during one of the pauses in the reading, Mr. Schwarzenbach said to Gurdjieff, "If I were you, I would let Miss Goepfert translate *Beelzebub's Tales*. She has a very good German."

Everybody seemed startled when Mr. Gurdjieff replied, "I already propose."

I soon learned that Mr. Gurdjieff's proposal was very real. He said to me, "If not married or have relationship like married, come to me." He wanted me to return with him to his Chateau du Prieure in France to translate *Beelzebub's Tales* into German. He urged me to come at once, but that was impossible; I was committed to the Opportunity Gallery and Hunter College until June.

I promised Mr. Gurdjieff that I would come to France as soon as my professional obligations were over. He told me to send a telegram to Mme. de Hartmann, his secretary, to let her know when I would arrive. It was winter, February I believe, when he sailed back to Europe. The year was 1929.



UNITED STATES LINES

S.S. Republic

15. Juni 29.

Lieber Dr. Paquet -

Lassen Sie mich  
Ihnen hiermit danken für  
Ihren Brief u. die Auskunft  
bet. Fundgrüff. Nach einigen  
Zögern habe ich festgestellt,  
dass mich nichts mehr in-  
teressiert als sein Buch

1929 Example of Louise Goepfert Letter to Alfons Paquet

Nachl. A. Paquet (II) 8 (III) (Goepfert, Louise)

Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg  
of Frankfurt am Main, reprinted with permission

## Chapter 3

# The Arrival

A-fter Gurdjieff left New York, I discovered that he knew Dr. Alfons Paquet, a good friend of mine from Frankfurt. Paquet had liked my feuilleton writings and invited me to the Frankfurter Zeitung writers' cafe gatherings. [Paquet, a man of ideas and social conscience, was a respected journalist, a dedicated pacifist, and an inveterate world traveler.] Not long after I had met Gurdjieff, I wrote to Paquet:

*In no way do I belong to the community here under the leadership of the brilliant Orage who practices "the method" nor to the eloquent people who become speech-less as soon as Gurdjieff enters the room. Chance has brought us together and, although language is a problem, mutual interest and understanding were established immediately.*

*The decision has yet to be made whether I want to go to the Prieure and attend to the supervision of the translation of the text into German. I know the difficulties. G. is headstrong even in the face of better knowledge. There is no material advantage to me in doing so. And I would be leaving my metier: art.*

*Please write me your opinion as soon as possible, as frankly as you would tell to yourself. And please be so kind as never to let Gurdjieff know that I asked for advice and judgment about him.* <sup>4</sup>

From Paquet's answer I learned he and Gurdjieff had met in 1921 in Constantinople at a demonstration of the sacred dances and again in Berlin.

[In response to a letter from Harald Dohrn, the managing director of Hellerau, with whom Gurdjieff had been negotiating a rental agreement, Paquet wrote: *In*

## The Gurdjieff Years: 1929-1949

*Berlin I never saw exercises as in Constantinople and was rarely with other people than G. He gave me a manuscript of a "Mystery" for dance. As a favor I transposed the erroneous text into good German and had it typed. About this I am still awaiting a reply. ^ Unfortunately neither the manuscript nor the typed version of what can be assumed to be "The Struggle of the Magicians" has been found in Paquet's literary estate.]*

Paquet knew Gurdjieff primarily as a world traveler full of stories of his adventures and almost nothing about his writing. Even so it was astonishing how much he had gathered about the universality and significance of Gurdjieff's teaching. Paquet's positive regard for Gurdjieff came with a warning: *Gurdjieff and what he teaches are among the most interesting things of our times. My personal experiences with him have been only good ones. But he is a man with a very strong will, maybe dangerous for (some) people. It's all about taking a risk. ^*

The four months between Gurdjieff's departure from New York and mine were difficult ones. Too many voices, most of them unasked for, gave their views on my adventure. Some were gossipers who told ugly stories about Gurdjieff, but I didn't believe them.

In June as soon as classes were over, I sailed for Europe. Orage, warm, all informing and informed, asked me to write to him from the Prieure, but I knew it would be impossible to "report" to him. I would soon be swimming in Gurdjieff's waters where I would not catch fish for anyone else.

While on board the S.S. *Republic*, I wrote to Paquet again: *After some hesitation I came to the conclusion that nothing interests me now more than his book and his method. I simply jump into this adventure—full steam ahead, I am*

## ***The Arrival***

*not even close to a decision about whether I will return to New York in autumn or if I will stay in Fontainebleau.* <sup>7</sup>

When I got to Paris, I visited Werner Picht, the well-known German sociologist and writer with whom I had become close friends. He opposed my going to Gurdjieff. When I asked whether I could come to him if I had to flee the Prieure, he assured me, "You can come to me anytime."

In Paris I did as Mr. Gurdjieff had instructed me. I wired my scheduled arrival time to Mme. de Hartmann. Then I took the train to the Fontainebleau-Avon station where I expected her to meet me. When no one came, I took a taxi down the memorable avenue of old sycamore trees to the Chateau du Prieure of Avon. The large house, once a monastery, was several hundred years old. It was surrounded by gardens. Behind it were woods.

I obeyed the sign, "*Sonnez fort* (ring loudly)," but the bell sounded feeble. The gate was opened by the slow-moving Mme. Stjoernal. She spoke German, but thankfully there was no time for conversation.

One of the large Renaissance windows on the upper floor of the Prieure flew open. Gurdjieff thrust first one elbow out and then the other. He seemed to fill the whole window. He called to me, "Hey Mees, Mees!" (Gurdjieff pronounced "Miss" as "Mees.") I flew up the stairs to meet him. Gurdjieff seemed all happy. All happy was I.

I was at the Prieure to translate *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. My work was to begin immediately. Gurdjieff called "Jeanna" (his name for Jeanne de Salzmann) into his room to meet me. He introduced us to each other as if this event were very important. He said, "Can trust one another."

He told Mme. de Salzmann, "Give her 'Art.' She professor of art in New York." (Gurdjieff always made much of my role as "professor of art." That sat strangely with me.)

He said, "Also give 'Civilization.' Contains about Germans. Also give proverbs from Study House. Can start translation proverbs." <sup>8</sup>

Gurdjieff ordered a bath for me. "Take time, wash off American dirt, then see."

The water trickled into the tub. I washed in a few inches of water. Someone knocked on the door. "Mr. Gurdjieff is ready for Paris. Can you come?" Within a few minutes I was with him in his Citroen on the way back to the railway station. It was my first lesson that with Mr. Gurdjieff there was no lingering.

In the car Gurdjieff told me that he had "made chik" of Mme. de Hartmann who had been acting as his secretary. ("Make chik" was Gurdjieff's expression, with corresponding gesture, to indicate the sound of a bothersome bedbug being squashed between two fingernails.) He said, "She impertinent, husband also." I did not believe that about Mr. de Hartmann who seemed so kind and gentle when I knew him in New York.

Now, in addition to translating, I was to be Mr. Gurdjieff's secretary, his "*secret-a-ry*." I was to keep his secrets for him. As a child one of my favorite fairy tales had been Grimm's "The Twelve Brothers." In the story a princess agrees to remain silent for seven years in order to free her twelve brothers from an enchantment that had turned them into ravens. She keeps her oath even when she is about to be burned at the stake. Then, just as the seven-year trial ends, the ravens return to their princely forms and rescue their noble sister from the flames. Yes, I could keep silent about Mr. Gurdjieff's secrets.

We went first class on the train to Paris. Mr. Gurdjieff pulled out his papers and began to write. I started translating the proverbs.

## *The Arrival*

In Paris we drove to his apartment. Then we went with Mr. de Salzmann to a restaurant in Montmartre. When I expressed annoyance at their speaking in Russian, Mr. de Salzmann told some good stories in German.

Mr. de Salzmann and I became good friends. He was a very original creature with big eyes and wonderful expressions. If he didn't believe someone, he would pull the skin below one eye down with his forefinger as if to say, "You tell me, hah?"

One day he told me why he never smiled. He said that once Mr. Gurdjieff had picked him up and put him above the world where he could see everything as it really is. Then he fell back down to crawl in the earth's dust again. From then on, he was unable to laugh. He yearned for that larger view until the end of his days.

Guests to the Prieure usually spent their first days on "the Ritz," the elegant second floor of the chateau. When my grace period on the Ritz was up, Mr. Gurdjieff escorted me on a ceremonial tour of the house and grounds to select my permanent room. As we passed from room to room, Mr. de Salzmann leaned toward me to whisper, "Don't say what you dislike. That one you will get!"

I chose a room on the austere third floor "Monks' Corridor" painted in ocher and oxblood red. My room, with a skull and crossbones painted above the door, was furnished simply with a bed, table, and chair. It overlooked the whole estate. From my window I had a view of the goldfish pond and the formal gardens.

Next door to my room was Elizabeth Gordon, a good, old English spinster of whom I became very fond during my time at the Prieure.

On the other side of Miss Gordon was Lili Chaverdian nee Galumnian and her little boy Serioja. In New York Mr. Gurdjieff had told me I would work on the

translation with Lili who could help me "to verify German."

Lili was warm, robust, with fuzzy hair and wonderful dark eyes. She had the most beautiful amber necklace and marvelous linens and furs. It was said that she and her husband, who was high up in politics, owned half of Armenia. In my time, Lili spent half the year with him and half at the Prieure.

Lili and her son came to the Prieure soon after my arrival. Mme. de Salzmann, who was usually quite composed, was very excited when she went into town to pick up her close friend Lili. It was a side of Mme. de Salzmann I hadn't seen before.

At the end of the corridor, Mme. de Salzmann lived in one large room with her two children, Natalie ("Boussik") and Michel. Mr. de Salzmann, who at that time worked in Paris restoring furniture and antiques, came for weekends.

Mr. Gurdjieffs own rooms were on the second floor in the right-hand tower with windows that faced in two directions.

By the time I came to the Prieure, Mr. Gurdjieffs wife, Julia Ostrowska, had already died. Other members of Mr. Gurdjieffs family and some uprooted Russians lived at the Prieure in the rambling of buildings away from the main house. There were Mr. Gurdjieffs brother, Dmitri Ivanovitch, and his wife, Astrig Gregorevna, and their three daughters, Luba, Jenia, and Lyda. There were Mr. Gurdjieffs sister, Sophie Ivanovna, and her husband, Gyorgi Kapanadze. And there was Mr. Gurdjieffs orphaned nephew, Valia [Valentin, son of Anna Ivanova and Frodor Anastasieff], who was in his late teens.

Among the Russians were Dr. and Mme. Leonid Stjoernal and son Nicolai, Mr. Svetchnikoff, and Mr. Reitlinger, a Russian with a German name.<sup>9</sup>

## *The Arrival*

Reitlinger had been a lawyer in Russia but now lived in very reduced circumstances. He would knock at my door to ask, "Can I have a little of your yogurt so I can make my own yogurt?"

Besides these "regulars" there were usually a number of guests, often American and English, who came to the Prieure for longer or shorter periods of time. Among them were Martin Benson, a practical down-to-earth American; Alan Brown, a lawyer from New York; Jean Toomer, the black author of *Cane*; Payson Loomis, a well-to-do Yale graduate from America; Nick Putnam, who later married Mr. Gurdjieff's niece Lyda; Edith Taylor (with daughter Eve), who married Swaska, an American of Czechoslovakian background; and Bernard Metz from England.

I never knew why Metz stayed, or why he was allowed to stay, but he did odd jobs and performed amusing stunts. When my birthday came in August, Metz brought me a bouquet of fresh vegetables. After my birthday dinner, Mr. Gurdjieff gave a speech which ended with, "What I wish for you, you cannot even imagine."

My good friend Gela Archipenko, at Mr. Gurdjieff's invitation, followed me to the Prieure. Mr. Gurdjieff, who must have thought I was lonesome with no one German to talk to, was particularly charming with her. He tried his best, but she was afraid of him and soon left the Prieure. Later when she was in a Berlin hospital, Gurdjieff sent her roses.

Peggy Matthews (later Flinsch), an old friend of mine who had been at the Prieure briefly before my time there, also came to see me. Once, during a period when Mr. Gurdjieff didn't want any visitors, Peggy climbed over the Prieure wall to visit with me.

On several occasions that summer, I wrote to Paquet inviting him to the Prieure. In July I wrote to him: Yes,

## The Gurdjieff Years: 1929-1949

*please come soon. Salzmänn and I are awaiting you. The Turkish bath that G. built himself awaits you. And G. will be very glad, especially because he seems to have many plans regarding Germany. G. is usually here from Saturday noon to Sunday noon. Otherwise he is at the Cafe de la Paix or traveling.<sup>10</sup>*

In September, after Paquet's visit to the Prieure, I wrote: *G. was horrified that you compared him to Plato. After my explanation, everyone (except Gurdjieff who indeed knows it better) appreciated how much truth there was in the comparison. Even so, everyone agreed it is impossible to compare him to anyone or anything. G. is, in fact, indescribable. "*

Within a week of my arrival at the Prieure, Mr. Gurdjieff took me to the location of the automobile accident which nearly ended his life in 1924. Dare I speak of this un-understandable experience?

*Can I tell how he took me to his place of "accident" and begged me to help him, to translate him—Him, who sat there in front of me with a crown of thorns on his head? Oh Holy Grail, oh Amfortas, how can I visualize it, how can I bear it? All my life's forces are for you, are part of you, I waited for you all my life—oh please take my offering of myself—let me help you. And I hear your voice, your voice in you—and it reaches me, "If you help me now, later can buy half of Germany." How amazing. I am transfixed—I am out of my body—I don't want to know what is "half of Germany." Oh you poor suffering Christ with the crown of thorns on your head—which I saw-----how can I serve you, help you, suffer for you? And there his voice comes forth, and he says, "If you help me now, later can own half of Germany." I am overwhelmed—on my knees before Him who reveals his suffering to me.<sup>12</sup>*

## Chapter 4

# Translation

In July 1929, I wrote to Paquet again: *After Constantinople where you last saw him, G. tried to establish his Institute in different countries and fought with all kinds of devils, finally in 1922 he bought this chateau with its remarkable past. For two or three years "The Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man" flourished with sixty to a hundred students from every country who, through "voluntary suffering" and "conscious labor," learned to know themselves and how to make the best and fullest use of themselves. There are endless stories about the "tyrant and despot" G. of that time! Then [in 1924] G. had a serious car accident and had to close the Institute.*<sup>13</sup>

As Gurdjieff recovered from the accident, he began to write his *magnum opus*, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. He started by dictating to Mme. de Hartmann, and then, when he felt better, he wrote himself. During the next years, he wrote almost incessantly wherever he was.

*To this day he spends every free minute writing. The book is now three volumes, the largest part written in Russian, a smaller part in Armenian. All is written in his unique style with many new words—and even new concepts. It destroys old associations and slowly introduces new ones in their place. When and if this book is published, it will be in six languages at once.*

Among G. 's sayings is that work here isn't done for the sake of the work but as a means. On the other hand, he is very concerned with his own work. G. 's maxim, which has guided his life, applies here too: "Do everything differently from what everyone else does."<sup>14</sup>

When Gurdjieff was satisfied with the Russian text, the material was transposed, word by word, into English. It has been suggested that Thomas de Hartmann made that rough English version of *Beelzebub's Tales*,<sup>15</sup> but while I was at the Prieure it was always a mystery who had made the first English translation. At the same time, Mme. de Hartmann's parents performed a similar verbatim transposition of the Russian into German. It was from this awkward German version that I had read in New York in the winter of 1929. During Orage's annual summer visits to the Prieure in the mid-1920s, he translated *Beelzebub's Tales* into literate English.

When I arrived at the Prieure in June 1929, I began translating Orage's English version of the book into good German. After testing me a few times, Gurdjieff let me work on my own.<sup>16</sup>

During this same time, Mme. de Salzmann was translating the English into French.

I sensed that Gurdjieff had chosen me to fulfill a need. He told me my German contained the four essentials for translating his books: (1) old religious language; (2) modern scientific language; (3) an understanding of folk or popular sayings, such as Mullah Nassr Eddin's; and (4) a capacity to learn to be exact.

The days of translation at the Prieure had a definite pattern. Gurdjieff almost always went out in the early morning before breakfast to a cafe in Fontainebleau or to the Cafe de la Paix in Paris, where he continued to revise *Beelzebub's Tales*.

During my time with Gurdjieff, there were over a dozen versions of the first chapter. I saw it grow from twenty to forty pages. Even at that, some of the best stories were left out.

By the changes he made, it was obvious that Gurdjieff

## Translation

did not wish simply to give new verbal knowledge. He wanted to change, open, develop something in the essence of man which could lead him to the creation of his own inner world and give him understanding. Gurdjieff knew that anything of value has to be worked for. His modifications were intended "to bury the bone deeper," which meant not giving the teaching in an easily accessible form. *Beelzebub's Tales* yields its wealth only when the reader engages himself with the material. The reader's willingness to experience confrontation and his capacity to question and to wait for an answer are essential for understanding.

I worked on translation all morning. When the weather was good, I worked outside on the beautiful terrace. I worked partly by myself, partly with Lili, comparing the German translation with the Russian original. Occasionally I compared the German translation with Mme. de Salzmann's French version.

Translating *Beelzebub's Tales* with its unusual words and long complex sentences—sometimes a page and a half long—was very difficult. When I wrote to Paquet in September, I addressed his concerns about Gurdjieff's style of writing: *Your concerns about style and words nourished all the resistance that I possibly could have to the chapter "Arch Absurd" which had been a hard nut to crack all week. Again—yes, again—slowly and through suffering I came to realize that nothing can be changed. What appear as stupid jokes, bizarre syntax, and solanka words are simply coatings for things that, in their pure form, can only be passed on to "initiates." Otherwise they need many incrustations in order not to "throw pearls before swine." It's just because G. wants [to reach] the normal human that he intentionally makes the book difficult for "intellectuals." The material is not meant to be*

*absorbed in a lopsided manner but instead with instinct and heart and mind all at the same time. It has to become second nature.*

["Solanka" probably refers to solyanka, a thick spicy, sour soup, popular in Russia and Germany, made in a variety of ways with many different ingredients. An alternate translation of "solanka words" might be "a mishmash of made-up words."]

*My struggle is something like, "I will not let You go unless You bless me."*<sup>s</sup> [Jacob's words when wrestling with God.]

*G. let me read the chapter "Fruits of the Former Civilizations and Blossoms of the Contemporary," a chapter that I often have read myself and hence I can better grasp than most of the others, I wish you could have been here! Everything can be found in this chapter. One may not be so stupid or simple-minded to say: he says what everyone says or he says the converse or just what is well known. Instead you have to find out in yourself why he says it this way, for which effect on the reader.*

*Oh, G. knows very well how ridiculous it is to hear, at the beginning of the chapter "Time," that one year consists of twelve months, one month has thirty days, etc. But still it is written down here. it's like a chair, please sit down, everything is very simple, get some rest, you learned that in school, oh, how you labored, well, all sciences are like that, yawn if you like, yes, you were always sleeping, but take care, you will fall if I take away the chair and give you something real, something ultimate, something that never, ever can be different, you will fall, you will choke, actually, oh, let's make a joke where you can laugh again and miss everything that is true and all the seriousness that lies in it, everything that is genuine, important, and real you had overlooked.*

## Translation

*I wave to you toward your castle from our chateau and hope that drawbridges, cars, trains, and airships will bring us together more often.*

*Of such long letters, Beelzebub is jealous. But you, you shake your head about the letter and me, the fool.* <sup>19</sup>

Sometimes, just when I thought I was finished with a chapter, Mr. Gurdjieff decided to rewrite it. Then I had to begin the translation all over again. This happened time after time. From a letter to Paquet: *I worked very very hard this week and experienced a lot until yesterday when I gave out in the Turkish bath. But today I was back at work. Here everything is all or nothing! Here there is something singular, something of the in-between, and without the usual sense of time that not I nor anyone can give you, you dearest human. You will attain it better by yourself, if you like, because you made a right beginning with your insight expressed in your letter that all your methods and skills, which I know are special, are not sufficient here.* <sup>20</sup>

On my first day at the Prieure, Mr. Gurdjieff had said, "Translate. Translate whole chapter. Try Alexander de Salzmänn. He speaks German, can translate. Can ask him." But, as I wrote to Paquet: *Salzmänn stammered the Russian into German and I guessed what it meant until he agreed and I liked it.* <sup>21</sup>

Translating with Mr. de Salzmänn was impossible. Whenever I asked him for one word, he gave five, and when I asked for ten words, he gave one.

Lili, on the other hand, suited me well for translation. She had an innate sense of language and had studied in Berlin and Paris. She was familiar with German, Armenian, Russian, and French. She couldn't translate, but she was very helpful in choosing the correct word to

convey a particular meaning. If I suggested two or three words to her, she could choose the right one.

When Gurdjieff left the Prieure in the morning, we never knew when he would be back. Luncheon, served either in his room or on the terrace, was supposed to be at one o'clock, but he rarely came back before two. Sometimes it was three in the afternoon before Gurdjieff returned.

Waiting for Gurdjieff to come back from his day's writing, I always suffered. I had nothing to eat since the unappealing black liquid that wasn't coffee and the burned toast that passed for breakfast. I was hungry, but no food was given. My stomach was in agony. When it was long past the normal time for a mid-day meal, it reacted, Now I don't want to eat! But when Gurdjieff got back, there was Armagnac. He started the toasts to the "idiots." Then hors d'oeuvres came. My stomach opened.

After lunch, as after most meals while I was at the Prieure, Gurdjieff would play music on his harmonium. It was as if it were a prayer, a direct food for making another inner effort. I didn't analyze it, I just let it rain on me.

One afternoon when Gurdjieff returned to the Prieure from his day's writing at the cafe, he joined me on the terrace where I had been translating *Beelzebub's Tales*. He looked very tired.

I asked him, "Why don't you work here in the fresh air in these beautiful surroundings?" I gestured toward the rose garden, the goldfish pond, and the rows of sycamore trees in front of us.

Gurdjieff replied, "I always work in cafes, dance halls, places where I see people, how they are; where I see those most drunk, most abnormal. Seeing them, I can produce impulse of love in me. From that I write my books."

## Translation

Many evenings in the salon with its beautiful gray walls and red curtains, a chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales* was read in Russian, French, German, or English, depending on which guests were at the Prieure. Regardless of the language read, I felt the flow of the chapter and recognized certain words. As I began to know the content of the chapters, it didn't matter what language they were read in. The unfamiliar Russian was like a dress which clothed a familiar body.

There slowly developed in us the capacity to "make oneself empty," to learn to open, to listen. Something new can enter only when there is space. This is a much more difficult process than most people want to believe. It is the freeing of the purely subjective thinking and picturing kaleidoscope, which we received automatically, and the acquisition of a consciously functioning, ever true, objective wealth in its place.

During the reading, Gurdjieff watched the listeners to evaluate what he had written and the exactness of its translation. New guests were surprised that he considered a single word or the flow of a sentence so very important, but we translators already knew Gurdjieff as "the teacher of exactness." For us, the translation was a school that freed us from our subjective conceptions and views. Thanks to the creation of a new, exact language, we came to an understanding which we couldn't have imagined in the beginning.

With Gurdjieff we came to use words precisely. He stated clearly that philology was a better route to Truth than philosophy.

We looked at roots of words. There were many philological disputes.

In my great effort to find the right terminology, I learned the Russian alphabet. I used Mr. Reitlinger as my living dictionary. Each time we sat next to each other, I

## The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949

would ask, "What does this mean? Now what does this mean?"

Mr. Reitlinger's automatism was a wonder to behold. Whenever he picked up the dictionary, he blew on it. Of course, I understood that in old libraries dust lay heavily on the books, but this was not an old library. Still, he blew on the dictionary to remove the dust that wasn't there.

Mr. Gurdjieff was annoyed with this habit of Reitlinger's. One day Gurdjieff asked me, "Why does Mr. Reitlinger irritate me so but not you? Because you're a woman. Not so bad. But such a man for me. Aaagh! *You see?*"

I asked all the Russians who lived at the Prieure about the meaning of the Russian word *nalichie*, a frequently used, significant expression in *Beelzebub's Tales*. Orage had translated it into English as *common presence*. Mme. de Salzman had translated it into French as *presence generate*,

"What is the German equivalent?" I wanted to know. For weeks I struggled with the question. Nothing I came up with seemed satisfactory. Finally someone said, "*Nalichie* is a financial term, for all you have, assets and debits." That's how I came to the German formulation, *der allgemeine Bestand*. It made sense to me. [The Russian word *nalichie* means the totality of all you have and are.<sup>23</sup>]

In the first chapter *O's. Beelzebub's Tales*, Gurdjieff dwelt on the importance of the two kinds of mentation—mentation by word and mentation by form. This idea arrested me. How very important it was to understand this. If I use a word, and someone else from a different culture, or even from a different family, associates in images other than I do with that word, then I have not really communicated with that person. I have only an illusion that my thought, expressed in words, has reached the other person. The listener has only an illusion that he has understood my thought.

## *Translation*

So how is it possible to teach with words? It might help to feel that the words are inadequate. In general, Gurdjieff, when he spoke aloud, used words sparingly. Of course, sometimes, when he was angry, the words would flow out of him. Then he would sigh, "Now, lost myself with all the talk."

When I came to the Priure in June of 1929, I intended to stay just for the summer. I expected to be back in New York when the Opportunity Gallery and Hunter College reopened in September. I had, after all, contracts and obligations. The Hunter College catalogue even contained a description of the courses I was committed to teach.

Toward the end of the summer, Mr. Gurdjieff took me on a long walk in the Priure woods. He started one sentence after another but didn't finish any of them. The gist was that he couldn't tell me what he had to do. His life was very hard. It was necessary for me to stay. I saw in this process, clearly for perhaps the first time, what is subconsciousness and what is consciousness. I knew—the subconsciousness knew—from the beginning, his call and my response were without termination, but the outer life—earning money, being secure—wanted to continue. As he was talking, I felt all this melt. It was similar to what happened in New York when I looked at the fashions in the Henri Bendel window. Gurdjieff did something, and it just went out of me.

What to do? What to do? I racked my brain. What excuse do I have? I wrote to the gallery and to the college telling them that my father was lying ill, and I couldn't come back. So I gave all that up. I thought I would never see America again.



## Chapter 5

# The Prieure Years

As Gurdjieff wrote intensively with pencil onto the thin French paper he liked to use, Dr. Stjoernal almost always sat with him. It was as if what poured into Mr. Gurdjieff, which he then put into words, was so strong that two people were required to receive it. Gurdjieff needed someone else to act as an antenna, and Dr. Stjoernal served him in that way. While Gurdjieff wrote, the waiters at the cafe in Fontainebleau or the Cafe de la Paix kept his cup filled with hot coffee, just as his nieces did at the Prieure. Occasionally some Russians came, received something from him, kissed his hand devotedly, gratefully, and left.

Sometimes Gurdjieff would tell me, "Come at such and such a time." When I arrived, he barely motioned me to sit down. He remained concentrated in his world, unaffected by the peripheral noise of chattering people and traffic on the street. Maybe in the beginning I said something, but I soon learned to wait until he turned to me and opened his "visor." Only then could I tell him what I had to report. It was the same for everyone. All of Gurdjieffs many visitors had to wait until he turned toward them, and that could take one, two, or three hours. Whoever came sat in his silent circle. In Mr. Gurdjieffs presence, people experienced the striking contrast between the noisy, hasty, deceptive outer world, and his quiet surety and inner, dense collectedness. I felt and sensed with full conviction that, through him, the Grail was being kept according to legend—guarded by angels in the air.

[In the several Parsifal/Parzival legends, the mystical Grail is described variously as a cornucopia, a precious

jewel, a bright stone, and the chalice of the Last Supper. Tradition holds that an experience of the Grail is an experience of Truth. The ever-present Grail is veiled from man's sight only by his own illusions.]

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Mr. Gurdjieff created difficult circumstances for his students. *Here no one chooses/or himself. One does what G. says—or one leaves.*

The more Gurdjieff valued a pupil, the more difficult he made the conditions. Mr. and Mme. de Hartmann had left the Prieure shortly before I arrived, but she came back to see Gurdjieff from time to time. When she did, Gurdjieff shouted at her until the house shook. It was relentless, endless, at all hours of day and night. At first I thought Olga de Hartmann was a terrible person. Later I came to think that he did her an honor by that.

One day Dr. Stjoernal said to me, "May I say something to you? How to explain it? Gurdjieff tries something that no one has tried. He tries to take a person born under one star and change their destiny to that corresponding to another constellation. And that is, in general, impossible."

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The need for money at the Prieure was immense; the task of acquiring it never ending. I had had experience raising money for the Opportunity Gallery, so, besides translating, I helped Gurdjieff in this way. I had to collect money from the visitors who came to the Prieure. If their contributions didn't come easily, I had to "milk them." At different times I wrote letters for Gurdjieff about money. Shortly after I arrived at the Prieure, I wrote to Lady Mary Lilian Rothermere, an important woman in London who

had given money to Gurdjieff. I had to tell her that even though Gurdjieff now had a new secretary, the need for money remained unchanged.

Once Gurdjieff told me to write a letter to Paquet for him. When I brought the completed letter to him, Gurdjieff stormed at me, "No! Start different." I was angered, for I had written the letter exactly as he had told me to. I calmed myself and wrote a second version. Gurdjieff stormed again. I wrote a third version which he accepted, even though it was very different from what he originally said he wanted. Then he said, "No right water closets in West. Must be hole. Imagine someone standing there. Feel not sure. Have to wriggle back and forth to find hole."

Not long after I arrived at the Prieure, Gurdjieff said, "Not easy, but you must make Mme. Stjoernal your secretary. Know German, can type." Mme. Stjoernal, uprooted Russian aristocracy, could do nothing without an earring. I had to gain her cooperation if the work on *Beelzebub's Tales* was to continue. So, when she was free, we would have tea sweetened with jelly, according to Russian custom. She would talk of olden times in Moscow. After a while I would say, "Would you please help?" Usually she did. Where else but with Gurdjieff would I have met, tolerated, and eventually learned to like such a person?

A time came when I needed more help than Mme. Stjoernal could provide. Gurdjieff said, "Find secretary." By advertising in a Paris newspaper, I found a young woman who typed well and wrote good German. She came to the Prieure by the day. Once she said to me, "Everyone around him is very nice, but not him. I don't understand him. I'm afraid." When I told Gurdjieff that, he laughed! He liked such stories.

At Gurdjieff's court, Mr. de Saizmann was the jester. He was a great mimic and could tell very funny stories. He often brought Gurdjieff to earthquakes of body-shaking laughter. I liked him for that.

Once he told of a German cure who, from time to time, while listening to his parishioners' confessions, exclaimed aloud, "*O du Wüuaschte*" ("Oh, you dirty libertine!"). Gurdjieff laughed loudly.

Mr. Gurdjieff often gave the people around him nicknames. Not long after I arrived, he began to call me "Sausage." Being "Sausage" didn't sit well with me. I wrote in that same letter to Paquet: *I found the term disgusting. I thought Gurdjieff insisted on it just because I refused to listen to it. Because I am an idiot who wants to learn and doesn't waste anything that comes my way, I accept this memento mori almost gratefully and with a smile.*<sup>25</sup>

Later Gurdjieff told me that "sausage" goes well with "pepper and mustard," which I understood to mean Gurdjieff himself, and then all was well.

Gurdjieff brought discipline to our eating and drinking. When he lifted his glass, we had to lift our glasses. When he drank, we had to drink. We developed the capacity to drink and be even more aware. We had to be very attentive for the rules never remained the same. Sometimes women got half of what the men drank. Gurdjieff might accept a refusal to drink, or he might urge the person on. He tested people in this way.

At the end of a meal, guests would be offered a choice of coffee or tea. Most people didn't know or wouldn't say what they wanted. "Oh, anything, Mr. Gurdjieff." "It doesn't matter, Mr. Gurdjieff." The right answer should

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have been either "Coffee" or "Tea." Later he added chocolate to the list of choices. "Coffee, tea, or chocolate. Make your choice." He played this game with visitors one after another.

Gurdjieff expected us to try what we didn't know or what we didn't like. He used to describe the dumbfounded expression on a person confronted with the unfamiliar as, "You look like cow returned from the day's grazing to face newly painted barn door. 'Cannot understand. This not my door.'"

One day very early in my stay at the Prieure, pig knuckle soup, too strongly flavored with garlic for my taste, was served in a large tureen. Bits of unidentifiable greens floated on the top of the unappetizing broth. I wouldn't have eaten the soup if I had had a choice. I ate what I was given, and I was watched.

When Gurdjieff asked, "Repeat?" I said, "Yes." I ate the soup, but I didn't know how long my stomach would permit me to continue sitting there.

When he asked a second time, "Repeat?" I again said, "Yes."

When he offered a third refill, I lifted my bowl to receive it. But Gurdjieff said, "No. No. I pity your stomach."

Children too were expected to eat whatever was put before them. In the spring, fresh radishes with tender green leaves still attached were served. A visiting three-year-old turned up his nose at them saying, "We don't eat radishes that way. I can't eat those dirty things." But he did.

Gurdjieff told us that we had become "too educated" to attend to our inner digestive processes. He said that we stopped noticing after the food was swallowed. To illustrate his point, Gurdjieff gave someone several hot Pspers—very hot peppers—to eat. Then he said, "Burns

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now. Afterward you not know where go, but tomorrow morning, at other end, burns again."

Gurdjieff was usually quiet at the table. He said, "When I eat, I self-remember." He chided those people who insisted on talking during the meal, "Idiot God made only one mouth. Should have made two."

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On Sunday evenings Gurdjieff and his "tail" (the entourage of students, family, and guests who followed him everywhere) always went to a restaurant in Montmartre. These meals were referred to as "Crayfish Parties" because of the small shrimp-like crustaceans served in abundance. My task was to find someone to cover the bill. If I couldn't get one of the guests at the Prieure to pay, I had, as I often did, to ask "poor Miss Gordon" to provide the funds.

One day I asked Mr. Gurdjieff if I needed to go to the party. "Haven't I gone often enough? Can't I stay home?" He said, "No. You need learn 'eat dog.'" ("Eat dog" was Gurdjieffs expression for enduring the unpleasant.)

The Montmartre restaurant was owned by a pleasant young couple devoted to Mr. Gurdjieff. One day the red-haired wife, accompanied by her beautifully dressed three-year-old daughter, came to visit at the Prieure. As was his custom, Mr. Gurdjieff gave the child candy of all kinds. The mother prompted the shy little girl, "Say 'Thank you.'" Gurdjieff admonished the mother, "You do just what you shouldn't do. You think she can thank me with a word." Gurdjieff understood that adults interfere with the young child's genuine inner experience of gratitude by making him or her externalize it with words.

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Mr. Gurdjieff was also opposed to the modern habit of praising children indiscriminately for all and sundry accomplishments. He said that if the child hadn't worked with a special intent, praise weakened the child's capacity to make efforts. And if the child had made a real effort, praise was not needed. Find another way to affirm the action, he advised.

On Wednesdays Miss Gordon went to the public market. Every week in the summertime she would bring back raspberries and sour cream. What a feast!

Once in a while, I accompanied Miss Gordon to the market. Sometimes six-year-old Michel de Salzmann came along with me. One day he dashed away, gone like a shot from my hand. I felt responsible. Where did he go? After searching, I found him hanging on to a donkey, caressing it. I heard that at one time Mr. Gurdjieff had given Michel a donkey. When hard times came to the Prieure, Gurdjieff told Michel, "I need to sell your donkey." Whether the donkey Michel found in the market was his donkey, I can't say.

One Easter Gurdjieff bought a child-sized Citroen as a surprise for Michel. Gurdjieff was so delighted with the miniature car he had to try it himself. When Gurdjieff sat in it, it buckled under his mass. It had been designed for the weight of a child, not that of an adult. The car was ruined.

On Saturdays everyone took Turkish baths, the women in the afternoon, the men later. Afterward, the most important meal of the week was served in the dining room with its large oval table. In addition to the

residents, there were guests—as few as one or as many as ten. It was all quite ceremonious with a sheep's head served every Saturday. Of course, the lean pieces were marvelously good, but the fat behind the eyes was considered especially tasty, too.

The children had to wait until eleven or twelve o'clock for their supper. They had to struggle to stay awake. At the children's table, Michel presided. Sometimes he was given food to divide among the other children. He would hand pieces around just as Gurdjieff did at the adults' table. Occasionally Gurdjieff asked a small child to give a delicacy of some kind "to the person who is most deserving." Not an easy choice for a child to make.

After dinner Gurdjieff played his harmonium and a chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales* was read.

In the early 1920s, before Gurdjieff's car accident, the after-dinner activities took place in the Study House. When I was at the Priure, this converted zeppelin hangar was a rarely used relic. I regarded its fountain of splashing water and colored lights as a reflection of the child in Gurdjieff. The readings from *Beelzebub's Tales* were held in the salon and Gurdjieff no longer taught the Movements, or sacred dances. Sometimes at night I heard Mme. de Salzman and Lili speaking together in quiet voices about the Movements. I was intrigued by what they said.

Years later in Paris Gurdjieff invited me to watch a Movements class. It was like seeing a series of Persian miniatures. He had the class move quickly from one Movement to another. I was breathless. After I had watched a few more classes, he suggested that I "partake." Facing us, Gurdjieff gave the Movement, showing it simply, more as an indication than a demonstration. Someone in the front row was usually the

first to catch it. From there it flowed into the rest of the class. At that time, Gurdjieff never repeated a Movement. Each time it was something totally different.

Gurdjieff, accompanied by different people, took many automobile trips through France. Day trips, overnight trips, trips lasting several days or a week. Sometimes one carload of people, sometimes more than one. Trips to Cote d'Azur in the winter, to Chamonix in the French Alps in the summer, to Vichy at any time to take the underwater massage.

*Beelzebub's Tales* went along on all the trips. Gurdjieff expected me to translate or read a chapter aloud to him while he drove.

Orage told me about a time he traveled with Gurdjieff to Vichy. While there Gurdjieff, after describing various pains and difficulties "here and here," sent Orage to a local doctor to get some medicine. Orage came back with a variety of pills and tablets. "Take this one on Monday, this one on Tuesday, this one once a week." Gurdjieff opened the bottles and swallowed all the pills right then.

I myself saw a similar event. When Michel came down with measles, he struggled with the doctor who came to examine him. "No," Michel insisted, "you can't touch me." When Mr. Gurdjieff heard this story he said, "Very right! Don't let any doctor ever touch you! Fight him!" Gurdjieff put that into Michel, who later became a doctor.

Gurdjieff's driving was very erratic. Even with the person responsible for reading the maps sitting next to him, we did not always arrive at our destination by the shortest, most direct route. Once Gurdjieff made a turn, he would never go back or retrace his steps. We took many detours in this way.

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One time in the Fontainebleau Forest, he got off the regular roads onto a terraced walking path. The car kept bumping downward four inches at a time. Eventually the car got stuck and could move no further. We left it behind and walked out. Later someone was sent back to retrieve the car.

Once, when we met Gypsies at an overpass, Gurdjieff said, "Ideal life."

If we were driving near a cathedral, we often stopped to see it. Sometimes he told me to walk through the cathedral because I had studied the history of art. Another person in our party might not be permitted to enter the cathedral. Only rarely did Gurdjieff go inside. On such occasions, he invariably straightened his collar and cravat first, like a businessman before entering a bank, and then walked into the cathedral with a firm step.

Gurdjieff and I walked together through Chartres Cathedral but just as he moved through all cathedrals—quickly. It was the same at cafes. He ordered and before the rest of us were finished he would be back in the car again. We never dawdled with Gurdjieff.

Whenever possible he stopped at the same small hotels and inns, where the people were already trained to his individuality and knew how he wished things. Even if we arrived at ten o'clock at night when everything was closed, the hosts would receive him with, "Oh Monsieur! Yes, of course!" Before long we would have dinner.

One time we stayed at a hotel where the food wasn't to Gurdjieffs taste. At the end of the meal he handed me money for the chef. He said, "Better give much to him so he believes he is good cook, and fixed for life."

Gurdjieff woke us very early in the mornings to continue our journey. From the time I was a child, I got up and dressed quickly in the morning, so when I traveled

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with him I was always ready to leave on time. One day Gurdjieff said to me, "I wake you last. You still be ready."

All my German friends were amazed that I was with this strange unknowable creature, Gurdjieff. Yet neither they nor their milieu was foreign to him. During the years at the Priure, I had two suitors. One, who had been a German exchange student the same year I was, worked in the German embassy in London. When I asked Gurdjieff if he could visit the Priure, he said, "Quite good! Not yet ambassador, but anyhow, let come." After meeting him, Gurdjieff said that he could be considered as a husband. The other was Fritz Metzger. When he and his sister came to see me, Mr. Gurdjieff commented on Fritz's marriage proposal. He said, "Now seem splendid but no matter what he have now, later, being Jew, maybe cannot pay for even bread for children. Impossible!" That was years before we could even imagine the extent of the anti-Semitism that later swept through Germany.

By the fall of 1929, I had completed the German translation of Book One of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. Gurdjieff, eager to see how the book would be received, had me write the following announcement:

*In the very near future, there will begin in Paris, New York, London, and Berlin, public readings from a series of books by G. Gurdjieff. They will show the objective reality of everything existing on earth as well as of world creation and world existence from the standpoint of sound human logic.*

*These readings will be given in various places in French, English, German, and Russian.*

*For more information please contact the main organizers of*

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*the public readings and the translators for the different languages. Their permanent addresses: Chateau du Prieure, Fontainebleau, France.*

*French: Mme. de Salzman [sic]*

*English: Mr. A. R. Orage*

*German : Mme. L. Goepfert [sic]*

*Russian: Mme. L. Chaverdian<sup>26</sup>*

Gurdjieff hoped to establish his work in Frankfurt through Paquet's contacts with the intelligentsia. At Gurdjieff's bidding, I wrote to Paquet to say we were coming to Frankfurt to read some chapters of *Beelzebub's Tales*.

In mid-September I wrote to Paquet:

*Z came back from Paris so exhausted. Collapsed on my bed, read your letter, and held in my hand the darkly marbled green and the labiates on shaky thin stems. Then I went to Mme. de Salzmann and said, "Listen. Hasn't he sensed G. with extraordinary delicacy?" We both were sure that, from the capsule, a fruit will emerge and that you haven't seen anything like it—even if the "moves of the Lord" are mysterious.*

*We do not know a date for the journey, but in any case we will not depart before September 25. As soon as I know when Frankfurt is scheduled, I'll telegraph.* <sup>27</sup>

Plans were made to travel to Frankfurt and Berlin in October, but for "many reasons" the plans were changed and then changed again.

On October 24 I wrote to Paquet: *We will not come to Frankfurt. I believe, later on, Mr. G. will honor also Frankfurt with a visit. When will you come to Berlin? If you cannot come very soon, would you be so kind to send "us" some "adequate" three-centered beings. I have worked like crazy and made very good progress with the translation. And*

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I have fulfilled a number of "social" obligations for Mr. G. and the house. <sup>29</sup>

Two days later, I wrote again: "Voila, our plans have changed: we will be in Frankfurt a week from today. Of course with the car, the three or four of us. If you are comfortable doing it, it would be good if you, without much ado, could arrange a meeting of nice "appropriate" people for a reading and discussion. I haven't decided whether to invite Mr. G. to stay with us. In any case, I want to pay for his hotel costs in my "homeland." <sup>30</sup>

In this letter I included a list of my friends in Frankfurt for Paquet to invite to the meeting. I wrote: I have intentionally selected all kinds of people, not only the snobbish ones. <sup>31</sup>

As Gurdjieff had requested, Paquet arranged an evening gathering in his home in Frankfurt. I read aloud for over three hours—all of "Ashiata Shiemash" including "The Destruction of the Saintly Labors." I wanted to explain something before I read the section on Kundabuffer, but Gurdjieff said no.

Throughout the reading Gurdjieff sat there as *the* attention, *the* presence. No one could leave or even yawn. Everyone had to listen.

When the reading was over, a friend of mine told me that the only word which had stuck in his memory from the long reading was Kundabuffer!—Kundabuffer in place of the genuine man, illusion in place of truth. Kundabuffer which, in the language of the Church, is called hereditary or original sin. Against his wish, my friend got wet when it rained.

While we were in Frankfurt, Mr. Gurdjieff and I visited

my family. He met my mother and sister for the first time. When Gurdjieff entered Maria's home, a house built in common with five or six other houses, he said kindly, "Wish to say strange greeting. Wish to say, '*Beelzebub* bless this house.'" Some time later back at the Prieure, Mr. Gurdjieff told me, "Unsafe world needs put *Beelzebub* somewhere, different places. Send to sister. Tell her, should be in iron box, very safe under bed." During World War II Maria's house was firebombed, but *Beelzebub's Tales* survived unscathed.

After leaving Frankfurt, we continued on to Berlin in the Citroen. Gurdjieff had me teach Michel to count in German. Then Gurdjieff told him, "Now you can go movie, but not only sit and stare. Count German inside, one to ten and down, *eins, zwei, drei...*"

As we drove, Gurdjieff blamed me for all the bad roads in Germany, of which there were many. Persistently! As if I had made the roads. I wondered what he was trying to teach me. Only later I remembered that Christ takes the sins of the world upon himself.

While we were in Berlin, we stayed in an apartment that Gela's sister had found for us. When Michel was ordered to stay in Mme. Stjoernval's room, he stood up, took a step back, and said, "No! Want *nemka!*"—meaning me. [*Nemka* is the Russian word which means both German woman and mute. Idiomatically the latter refers to a person who doesn't speak the Russian language.]

Mr. Gurdjieff was pleased that Michel had come forward with his own wish. Gurdjieff asked me, "You really want him to?"

I said, "Oh, yes!" So Michel slept in my room. He seemed very happy.

In Berlin I was responsible for arranging readings of my German translation of *Beelzebub's Tales*. I was to invite all

my former friends, professors, and co-students as well as certain Russian emigres from a list of Mr. Gurdjieffs.

Because there was no telephone in the apartment, I had to go out to the public telephone booths to make the endless calls to invite people for readings. Michel, who always went with me, would squeeze into the telephone booth beside me.

During the two weeks we spent in Berlin, we read regularly from *Beelzebub's Tales* in the evenings. The first night I read "The Fruits of Former Civilizations and the Blossoms of the Contemporary." Some of the Germans squirmed in their chairs as they listened to Gurdjieffs descriptions of the inventions of their countrymen. Most of my acquaintances thought I was stark, raving mad.

While I made the outer arrangements for the readings of *Beelzebub's Tales*, Mme. de Salzmann practiced the piano. She had played piano as a child, as all educated people play piano. Now she had to learn to play Mr. Gurdjieffs music, but not as she was accustomed to play. His music required something different. She worked at it from morning until night. Once as I came up the elevator, I heard her playing Gurdjieffs music on the piano. As I listened, I understood something about inner effort. I had translated words about effort, but I hadn't really known what it meant.

In Berlin, Gurdjieff wrote in the Romanische Cafe on the Breitscheidplatz, a gathering place for artists and writers. Many people went to the cafe daily, if not to write, then to read the newspapers which hung over horizontal wooden dowels.<sup>12</sup>

Just as in Paris, Dr. Stjoernal sat with Gurdjieff while he wrote and rewrote *Beelzebub's Tales*. What a sight those two men in long beards were!

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Gurdjieff sometimes sent me on commissions from the cafe. Get this. Telephone so-and-so. Exchange money. He always said, "Scurry, scurry, quick."

When I came back from my errand, he would be sitting there like a meteorite—strong, impenetrable— something fallen from another world. I sat down near him. I learned to sit that way as the world whirled with the noise of people and taxis in the background. I sat. Nothing mattered. When I got up, I felt better, lighter.

On one occasion Gurdjieff gave me a United States gold piece and said, "Over there bank, change." I did as I was told and soon came back with ten dollars' worth of German marks.

Gurdjieff looked up and said, "Mees, twenty I gave. You pay ten."

I had such an inner struggle to accept his words. Did I really not know the difference between a ten and twenty? Heavens! I had to go more and more on my knees. To bring me to where I know I know nothing—that's teaching!

Paquet was supposed to meet us in Berlin, but Gurdjieff decided to leave early. On November 16, while sitting with Gurdjieff in the Romanische Cafe, I wrote to Paquet: *You are coming too late. We are leaving tomorrow. How so? Well, you know that for Mr. G. the world is trifle. The same way I return to my apartment to pick up my umbrella, he drives back and forth between Paris and Berlin.*

*We will keep the apartment. Mme. de Salzmann is staying a little longer because Michel is sick. Mr. G. says we will surely be back in two to three weeks. Some people here are already interested. It would be good if you could think of different people who should meet Mr. G.*

*Unofficially, I think it would be very good if you could write about Gurdjieff, to acquaint the public with his name.*

## *The Prieure Years*

*Who he is, really is, we do not know, but everyone has a mental image of him as the most egregious, richest man, dangerous in his normality and superior to everybody in his knowledge. Ultimately everyone, who is not dumb, deaf, or pompous, arrives at the position of no longer wanting to find out who G. is but to find out, through him, who they are. And he provides ample opportunities for this purpose.<sup>33</sup>*

Back at the Prieure, I came down with an inner ear infection and a high fever. Gurdjieff called me from Paris. Could I *please* go on another trip to Berlin with him? Of course I could, for I was his instrument. On the train ride he had me read to him from "Beelzebub in America," the part about the Gypsies and the lice. My fever disappeared.

## Chapter 6

# Travels

In December 1929, I accepted an invitation from a professor and his wife to spend the Christmas holidays with them in Davos, Switzerland. While there, I received a letter from Mme. de Salzmann at the Prieure. She concluded, "I hope you don't linger long. Here alone is stability."

Shortly after my return to the Prieure in early 1930, Gurdjieff announced, to my complete surprise, that we were going to America in February.

This was the first of three trips I took to the United States in Gurdjieffs company. We sailed on the German steamship the S.S. *Bremen*. On shipboard I always had the difficult task of ordering Gurdjieffs meals from the German menus.

It was standard practice on board ship for the meals to extend over a long period of time: first hors d'oeuvres, then a long pause; then soup, followed by another long pause; and so on. Gurdjieff wouldn't endure these pauses between courses. He explained that the stomach closes up if it thinks it is finished, and then has to open up again when more food comes. He said that one has to eat continually in one line and then be finished! So not only did I have to learn what he liked to eat, but I had to arrange the serving of the many courses to suit him.

One night when I ordered oysters for myself, Gurdjieff made an awful ruckus. Everyone in the first class dining room heard as he scolded me terribly, "No dirty fisherman in Asia would ever eat that most dirty thing! How can you?"

The waiters had compassion for me. They brought me the Armagnac I had ordered in a coffee cup. "So he

doesn't see what it is," they whispered to me. For twenty years after that I couldn't eat oysters!

When the *Bremen* docked in New York, Gurdjieff stepped off the boat with an Armagnac bottle half visible in his coat pocket. This was during Prohibition. I said to him, "Put it deeper. It shouldn't be seen." He didn't. It was like the time when, at a gathering of people newly interested in his ideas, he started scratching himself. Embarrassed, I leaned toward him and asked, "Why are you doing that?" He replied shortly, "Fleas," and scratched again.

In New York, acting as Gurdjieff's secretary, I arranged for readings of *Beelzebub's Tales* in one or another of the furnished apartments that we rented at 204 West 59th Street.<sup>34</sup>

I had to make people pay two, three, or four dollars to hear a chapter read. Someone described me in that role as "merciless."

The following letter, written in March 1930 to Dr. Walter Beran Wolfe and originally in German, is typical of ones I wrote during that period.

*Mr. George Gurdjieff, most known for the "Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man" and the demonstrations of Eastern holy dances, in the last years composed many music pieces and wrote a book of a number of volumes which combines all different sciences on the basis of "know yourself."*

*The title of this book is Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, or An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man.*

*There will be a reading from the German translation this coming Thursday, March 6, punctually at 8:45 in the house of Mrs. Robert F.J. Schwarzenbach, 9 East 62nd Street. A few pieces of his music will also be played.*

## Travels

*The invitation to this evening is due to the suggestion of Mrs. Rita Romilly. Your friends are also welcome.*

*Admission: \$2.50.*

*Sincerely,*

*Louise Goepfert, secretary<sup>35</sup>*

Cooking was a kind of recreation for Gurdjieff. He liked to prepare traditional Asiatic dishes and concoctions of his own invention for his guests. While we were in New York, I often accompanied "Dr. Culinary," as Gurdjieff sometimes called himself, on shopping expeditions to buy the ingredients he required for these meals. We went to the Greek stores on 9th Avenue near 40th Street where fresh, not "Chicago-killed," meats and really fresh fruits and vegetables could be found. As Gurdjieff chose what he wanted, he just pointed at it. He never named anything. Whoever was nearby had to get the food to the car quickly even if it meant hoisting watermelons onto their hipbones.

Gurdjieff made a strong impression on these simple shopkeepers. He knew what was what. He was without hesitation or doubt. He had to be attended to instantly with no waiting around. Years later when I went back to the same street, the shopkeepers asked after "that man."

As on all the trips to America, raising money for Gurdjieff's work was a major concern. Gurdjieff showed us how to use any occasion to raise the necessary money. We couldn't be shy. We lost the "Oh-I-can't-ask" attitude.

One day in March 1930, when Gurdjieff returned from his office, he asked me to write a letter to Margaritha Schwarzenbach. I did as he asked and included his words to me: *Mees, I don't wish to spoil my meeting with Mrs. Schwarzenbach today when she comes to the cafe. I sincerely don't wish to spoil that meeting through "dirty dollar*

## The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949

question." But you will agree that objectively this question must be brought up. You remember, Mees, that she had an objective duty this winter and since she fulfilled it only half, I am objectively compelled to remind her of \$4000. You know that I borrowed this sum until the first of March and that I must return it at once. It is now some days after the first of March. May be they have already begun a lawsuit—you understand what that means—a lawsuit against Prieure. She is also objectively obliged to pay for this trip of mine which is also concerned with her delay of the fulfillment of her objective duty. But that is another question. Now I wish to remind her of \$4000. Mees, you be so kind to tell Mrs. Schwarzenbach in a letter that I too, truth, hate to speak of "dirty dollar question," but that I am compelled to remind her of her objective duty. In the cafe I very much wish to speak of something very different with her.

I concluded my letter to Mrs. Schwarzenbach with these words: *And I, dear soul, repeat this conversation to you as best as I can. I wish very much for Mr. Gurdjieff and for you that this dirty question can be resolved without you having to talk about it or at least without you having to talk much about it.* <sup>36</sup>

One evening on the ship back to France in April 1930, I was sitting with Gurdjieff and the rest of his entourage in the first class dining room after dinner. People were dancing to the orchestra music. A gentleman approached me, bowed and asked, "May I have the pleasure?" I looked at Gurdjieff as if to say, "May I?" He shrugged noncommittally, as if to say, "No matter." So I danced.

When I returned to the table, Gurdjieff shouted at me, "Real man not need titillation. This titillation. This manifestation I hate." He heaped abuse on me. Immense abuse! The whole boat shook with his voice. Everyone

## Travels

around us was disturbed by what they took to be an uncultured jealous man making a row.

My reaction was so strong I couldn't move my face. If I had understood that it was titillation, I wouldn't have danced. I hadn't thought. I hadn't valued. But was it titillation? Was it really titillation? I had such a terrible struggle!

So I saw myself as only partially committed to the wish for transformation. In a moment I had acted, not from any particularly strong desire, but from lack of awareness of making a choice. That was unforgivable!

I was learning that I know nothing, that I'm not right if I behave only according to socially correct values. I needed to learn how to bring everything to a new standard.

I didn't sleep that night.

The next morning Gurdjieff told me, "Write letter to mother. Say, 'Please come Prieure.'" In preparation for her arrival at the Prieure, Gurdjieff considered, "Which chapter read when mother comes?" Then he said, "'Ashiata Shiemash.' That for mother."

Later, whenever people came to the Prieure, Gurdjieff would ask me, "Which chapter you say should read?" Determining which chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales* to read for a particular guest was quite a study in psychology. He passed that on to me.

In the course of years, as one listened to *Beelzebub's Tales*, one noticed that the outer man who takes himself to be so important, whose whole existence is filled with thousands of little daily enthusiasms, usually became quieter and more serious and the inner man, to whom almost no one can break through, made his appearance—only rarely at first but more often later. One did not have to talk about it, but one sensed that this book had become real nourishment and an inner measuring stick.

## *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949*

There was no place for self-satisfaction when one realized how long it had taken even to approach understanding something, no place for complacency when one noticed that listening for two hours was already too much. Each page in *Beelzebub's Tales* led the listener to recognize his own inadequacy and disunity.

At the same time it strengthened in him the desire for something stable, sure, and lasting. It furthered his ability to search and ponder. It awakened in him forces which never proved him right, but which gave him the taste of what a man could and should be.

After our return from America in the spring of 1930, my sister Maria, her husband, and their two young sons were invited for Easter at the Priure. Such experiences they had while they were there! Gurdjieff gave my brother-in-law, who had never killed an animal, the task of slaughtering and preparing the lamb for Easter dinner.

Gurdjieff paid a lot of attention to my nephews, Peter and Hans. The little one, Peter, couldn't quite walk yet. Gurdjieff, sitting cross-legged on the ground, enticed the child to him. It was wonderful to see little Peter crawling all over Gurdjieff. I felt Gurdjieff was trying to create the wish in me to have a child. He used to say, "Woman gets soul with child." And, "Not necessary have child, necessary readiness for child."

Gurdjieff often stressed the importance of the relationship among the children in a family. Once he urged a couple with an only child to have a second one. If not, "when you dead, he all alone." Another time, years later at a party in New York, he gave a young girl an extra good bite to eat and told her to share it with the one she liked best in her family. When she gave it to her mother, Gurdjieff said disapprovingly, "*Canaille* wants to please mother. Should have given to sister. When mother is gone

under ground, sister still have for all life. Must calculate better!" [In this context, *canaille* is probably best translated as rascal.]

Later, during the war, when Gurdjieff heard that one family had three boys and another family had three girls, he said, "Why not exchange? Take one boy in girl family, one girl in boy family." Of course they didn't do it, but I thought it was an example of Gurdjieffs immense common sense.

At the end of April 1930, I wrote to Paquet:

*America went by so quickly, and I was so completely absorbed by the business of the extraordinary activities of Mr. Gurdjieff that I couldn't answer your letter even from over there. Now I am again at the Prieure on one of those benches on the terrace with a view of the well-structured formal garden in bright spring green.*

*Gurdjieff let me read the English translation to Americans, to observe how they experienced it, and with the same purpose the French version to the French. He wants to test the German version on Germans in Germany, but he doesn't want to do this in Berlin for which he has other plans but instead in "another German spot." When I suggested Frankfurt, he seemed satisfied, certainly also because you are there. It should be possible to put together a group of serious people of which, according to Mr. G. 's wish, should be at least ten "family fathers." The listeners would, of course, be his guests. The book would be the "meal, " and Mr. G. would cover the costs of the meeting place. If you agree, perhaps this can be realized as soon as May.<sup>37</sup>*

Paquet responded to my letter immediately. He expressed scepticism about finding ten "family fathers" able to attend an on-going series of readings and meetings in the current climate in Germany. He spoke about his wish that

Mr. Gurdjieff not set his hopes too high. He wrote: *Nobody has time and inner peace. The economic and job situation is so difficult in Germany that everybody is tense to the limit. It is an unfavorable time to accomplish spiritual things.* After elaborating on the crisis in Germany, Paquet continued: *But for all of that, I say, come to Frankfurt! I will do everything I can.* <sup>38</sup>

[There is no evidence that a gathering with Paquet, his small circle of interested friends, Louise Goepfert, and Gurdjieff ever occurred during the spring or summer of 1930. In subsequent years, Gurdjieff and Paquet continued to communicate regarding the possibility of other (unrealized) meetings in Frankfurt. In March 1934, Paquet wrote to Gurdjieff. After saying how pleased he was to hear Gurdjieff's voice on the telephone, Paquet explained why his busy schedule made a meeting very difficult. Nevertheless, he proposed a somewhat complicated workarround. In the same letter, Paquet refused Gurdjieff's invitation to travel with him to America.<sup>39</sup>

Two days later Gurdjieff sent a telegram from Berlin to Paquet in Frankfurt which said simply: *Unfortunately cannot come. Letter to follow.*<sup>40</sup> ]

In preparation for our second trip to America, which began on November 11, 1930, Gurdjieff had me formulate several oaths. Everyone at the Prieure who was going to New York had to sign one. One simple oath read: *I will keep fully silent about everything concerning Gurdjieff, Prieure, and Gurdjieffs work.* <sup>41</sup>

Another, dated November 1, 1930, read:

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*I herewith agree and bind myself to the following conditions for my coming stay with Mr. Gurdjieff in New York:*

*I. I will not have any personal contact—neither spoken nor written—with any person with whom either Mr. Gurdjieff comes in contact or belonging to the former group of Mr. Orage.*

*II. I will control my behavior and manifest it in the sense of reverence towards Mr. Gurdjieff and courtesy towards those around him.*

*III. If Mr. Gurdjieff thinks it necessary to give me any detailed demands in these directions I will submit at any time.*

In New York we again stayed in apartments at 204 West 59th Street. <sup>43</sup>

Gurdjieff immediately began the reorganization of the Orage groups which Gurdjieff described in his book, *Life Is Real Only Then, When "I Am."* At a gathering of these groups, at Gurdjieff's request, I read aloud a letter to Orage. Then the "Orage people" were asked to sign an oath not to have any further contact with Orage without instructions from Gurdjieff.

It was my responsibility to watch the people present and then to make a list indicating into which of three categories each person fell. The first category consisted of those people who signed the oath absolutely and unconditionally; the second, of those people who said definitely they could not or would not sign the oath; the third, of those people who were uncertain about signing or had reasons or excuses for not signing. In this latter group there were many. "He's my editor." "I go to his courses in literature."

During one of the meetings with the Orage groups,

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Gurdjieff told them that he wouldn't come to their next meeting. He said, "Last time see me."

Despite his words, when it came time for the next meeting, Gurdjieff and I went to it together. Before we entered the room full of agitated talking people, Gurdjieff said to me, "Be very still." Then we walked right into their midst. Unseen by everyone, we heard all that was said.

Orage was in England at the time the letter was read, but he arrived in New York shortly thereafter. He immediately met with me to hear for himself what had happened. Then he asked me to arrange a meeting for him with Gurdjieff. Afterward he signed the paper against himself.

Readings from *Beelzebub's Tales* continued. The following notice was posted: *There will be one more reading of the book next Friday, December 19, 1930, at nine in the evening, in Apartment Q, 204 West 19th Street, before Mr. Gurdjieff leaves for Chicago. It is expected that Mr. Gurdjieff will himself speak on matters pertaining to his activities in New York. For further particulars, telephone Miss Goepfert, Circle 7-3748. Fee: Members, and those who had attended one or more other meetings, \$2.50. New persons, \$1.00<sup>44</sup>*

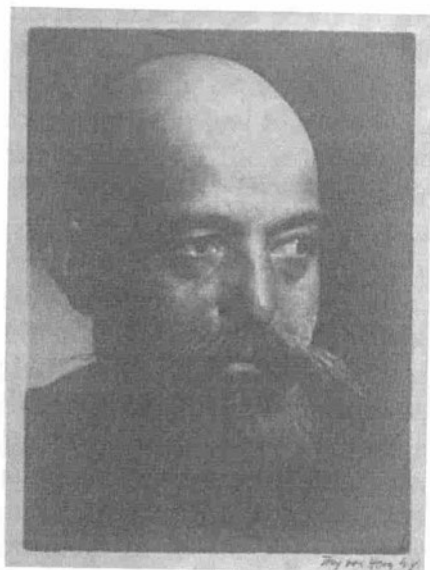
On one trip to America, this one I believe, we took Michel de Salzmann and Nicolai Stjoernal along with us. Gurdjieff told the two boys to investigate America. And they did. They roamed through the streets and stores of New York like lice.

One day that winter in New York, Gurdjieff told me he wanted to have photographs taken the next day. He said, "Get best photographer in town." When I called the best photographer, he was insulted that I should think that he would be available on one day's notice.



**Winter 1930-31 Gurdjieff "Family" Portrait by Tony von Horn**

Photo given to author by Louise March for inclusion in this book.



**Winter 1930-31 G. I. Gurdjieff by Tony von Horn**

Photo given to author by Louise March for inclusion in this book.

Instead I arranged with Toni von Horn, a German friend of mine to take the pictures. [Tony von Horn, as she spelled her name on her photographs, was one of the first women professional photographers.]<sup>45</sup>

The next day we trooped into her studio. A variety of different photographs were to be taken. First Toni posed Gurdjieff by himself. She suggested an apparatus to hold his head still while she took his picture. That infuriated Gurdjieff. He said, "If wish, could hold head still till last day." While Toni photographed him, he looked at me. I felt an immense weight as if the world were pressing on me. I struggled to withstand it. There arose in me, "I can hold it."

Then it was time for the group photograph of all of us: Mr. Gurdjieff, Dr. Stjoernal, Mme. de Saizmann, myself, Michel, and Nicolai. Such a fuss! Who should stand? Where to sit? How to be? In the end, Mme. de Salzmann and I stood while the others sat—the two bearded men, one on each end of the couch, the two boys in the middle.

The next day Gurdjieff shaved off his beard. That had been the reason for the pictures.

Money continued to be a significant issue. The following appeared on January 28, 1931 in the *New York Herald Tribune* in an article describing Gurdjieff's visit to New York: "Mr. Gurdjieff said that he was in America to 'shear sheep,' among other things, but he declined to elucidate his meaning."

We knew what he meant. He needed money to support his work and "shearing sheep" was his phrase to describe how he was going to get it. He would say, "Someone has too much, why not take? The sheep is always glad when it gets its wool taken. So, the one who has too much money, should give. Better way than hoarding."

## *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949*

On December 28 before Gurdjieff left for Chicago, he wrote a letter which he asked me to read aloud to his New York students. It said in part:

*And so, you, who have become for me, accidentally or by the Will of Fate, dear friends of mine in New York—though often, so to say, "growled at," to which you of course replied in a like manner.*

*Tomorrow I intend to leave for Chicago with the same center-of-gravity of intention and the same intensity of desire, to continue making conscious efforts for the actualization in practice of the tasks I have set myself, which I had when I arrived and with which I was occupied among you all the time in New York; namely, first of all to finish as quickly as possible my expositions on paper which I had decided on beforehand, as well as the translations into other languages which have already been commenced; secondly, to procure and pay off the comparatively large debts which have gradually and inevitably accumulated—in consequence of the insufficient income to meet the expenditure—during the years of my being occupied with writing; and thirdly, collect the required sum of money for the publication and the spread of all that I have already written.*

*During this last stay of mine here in your country, a part of these tasks I have already actualized more or less satisfactorily, of course, in this case also, with the help of various higher forces and with the help of several of you.*

*Now, going away and leaving a part of the people devoted to me with you, I have divided between myself and Miss Goepfert all that is further required for a month, namely, the fulfillment of what is inevitably required owing to various arrangements which have been made in respect of procuring and sending to Europe the money for the said purpose, and each of us must fulfill this whatever it might cost in order to avoid all misunderstandings, both in the given period of*

## Travels

time, on account of the said arrangements which have been made, and also during the period of the great and lasting effects which ought soon to arise, of the results of the consequences of the activities of the whole of my life.

The obligations I have imposed on Miss Goepfert and which she has willingly taken upon herself for the period indicated, consists in this, that she must obtain and put at the disposal of the Notary at Fontainebleau, 350,000 francs for wiping off the mortgage taken on the Prieure by near people around me six years ago, just at the period of the greatest crisis of my common work, which arose thanks to my personal illness as well as to the illnesses of my dead mother and wife, and the payments for which mortgage, by the way, were personally for me all these latter years, a most absurd what is called "bottomless-barrel," and very frequently exasperated my nerves, already sufficiently exasperated without this from intensive work.

As I find that the obtaining from one person of the sum of money required for Miss Goepfert is very difficult and even unjust in the present material position in America, I therefore beg all of you, my American essence-friends who live in New York, to help Miss Goepfert, according to the possibilities of each one of you, to carry out the obligation she has willingly taken upon herself.

Meanwhile I can only say in reference to this, that I, namely the author of "An-Impartial-Criticism-of-the-Life-of-Man" give my word to each one of you, to return in one year with thanks, the amount assigned for this purpose.

The first and second pages of this document were initialed by Gurdjieff. The last page bore his signature, "G. Gurdjieff."

When Gurdjieff returned to Europe on March 14, 1931, I remained behind. I had to see what I was without

him. Gurdjieff told me the Prieure's door would remain open to me for only a few months.

Before he left, my heart was almost torn out of me as I read "The Mountain Pass" aloud to him. "Why you cry?" he asked. "Sausage, now difficult see me." He indicated his shabby jacket. "Easy for you when I was king."

A voice in me cried out, "To me you are king, most certainly." I had to wrest myself away from him.

From March through June of that year my friend Peggy Matthews and I drove across the United States. It was an adventure of work, sightseeing, and mishap. There were flat tires, detours, and car accidents. We visited the Indian ruins at Frijoles Canyon, participated in chanting and sand-painting with the Navajo Indians, and saw the Taos Pueblo and the Grand Canyon. When I got sick, I was treated by an Indian medicine man. We went to the Spanish mission at San Luis Rey, a Holy Rollers church, a Theosophical Society meeting, and a Negro Baptist Festival. I spent time with my old friend Gela, saw Jessmin Howarth and her daughter Dushka, and visited Miss Gordon's sister.

Our itinerary was chosen to include cities in North Carolina, New Mexico, and California, where Orage knew people who were sympathetic to Gurdjieff's work. I contacted these people and, in several locations, gatherings were arranged where I read parts of *Beelzebub's Tales*. We even raised some money for the Prieure in this way. Edited excerpts from my journal of this trip include the following:

*April 9: Left Bat Cave, North Carolina with George Dotson, killed black cat, flat tire, peach blossoms, detours, George nearly killed old woman, Peggy ran into truck in Nashville, slept for \$1 apiece in very nice country hotel, high old bed, Tennessee, dead tired.*

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April 12: Ran out of gas. George walked three miles, we sat on railway track. Desert landscapes, rose-pink landscape, blue shadow, grey-white grass, sage brush. Arrived Santa Fe, went La Fonda Hotel, sent George back.

April 21: Medicine man asked me, "What would you do if I chant?" I answered, "Pray." Then, I already a little better. Had him two to three hours, chant, rub forehead, shoulders, knee. Drank medicine water with herbs from shell, slept afterwards and felt relieved.

April 30: For once made 100 miles in two hours, two minutes later blowout, steering wheel very bad, two new tires. Deserted mining district, fierce-looking men, Needles, California for lunch, very hot, waited for two more tires to be fixed. Engine constantly boiling, went on road under construction, condenser burnt through. Peggy walked to town, I sat happily in shade. Farmer came and made repairs. I drove for first time alone. Windstorm.

May 10: With S. planned Gurdjieff evening in detail. Later, at V.'s, Greta Garbo, long eyelashes, asked many questions about Gurdjieff, impressed by his picture.

May 12: Gurdjieff evening, read "From the Author." Different people, about 30 present, a few interested. Others listened downstairs to private stories about G.

June 11: Car accident. Had pre-picture in my mind, saw two wheels over edge. Short argument with Peggy, who criticized my passing a car. I, to my own surprise, angry, "Now because of your nervousness, we shall have an accident," and over the edge we went. Slow, second gear, top was down, not afraid. Peggy gently thrown out, then car turned over, glass. I thought now it is serious. Everything quiet then. I under car, looked around, couldn't get out. Peggy helped me. She not a bit injured, I one badly cut finger, bruises on thigh. We danced, happy, ran two miles. Came home five minutes before seven, cooked quickly, Edward

*Weston [the photographer] seven o'clock to dinner, said not a word about the accident.* <sup>46</sup>

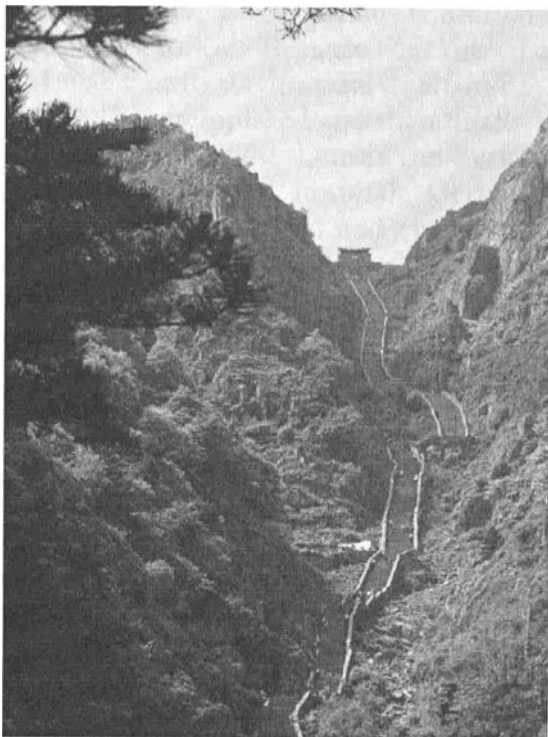
On June 25 on the ship, *Asana Maru*, Peggy and I embarked from San Francisco on a four-month journey through the Far East. It was a daring expedition for two young single women in 1931. Vignettes of memory remain.

In Japan, sushi and tempura, tea ceremonies, Kabuki and Noh theater, and geishas so delicate they were like porcelain figurines in movement. An evening at the Japanese public bath—very hot and very crowded, reminiscent of pictures of Hell.

At Myoshinji, the Rinsai Zen Buddhist Monastery, I met the vigorous and yet dignified Abbot Kozuki, in black priest-robe and white kesa. He gave me a rosary with eighteen black pearls, representing the evil desires in man that should be turned into virtues. When I asked him if there was anything in Buddhism that corresponded to the Christian idea of grace, he replied, "There is an outside help—an absolutely necessary one—the teacher who has to watch and direct the pupil until he can stand on his own."

In China, rickshaws, jade and embroidery and silk, the sweet smoke of opium that hung in the air everywhere, lotus blossoms, deer stabled like horses, the quiet yet magnificent Ling Yin Monastery with its Great Buddha Hall like a Chinese Valhalla, and an airplane flight over the Ming animal paths.

One very dark thick night a silent procession—a pistol-carrying Chinese bodyguard, barefooted Peggy, a coolie guide, and I—wended its way up a hill. Lightning flashed in the distance causing silhouetted shapes to appear and disappear. At the top of the hill was a building with a large stone hearth and copper warmer to dry tea leaves. Inside, the tea merchant unfolded little newspaper



**1931**  
**6000 Steps leading to**  
**Mount Tai Shan by**  
**Charlie fong**

packets of tea for us to smell and taste until he found one "good enough" for us.

One morning in Soochow (Suzhou) I woke up feeling as if I had glass in my eyes. I was diagnosed as having an infection of the cornea, a very serious condition in those days before antibiotics. Because of the danger of blindness, I was sent to the hospital in Shanghai. On the long train ride, I contemplated and then finally accepted that I might lose my eyesight. During the week that I was a patient in the Shanghai hospital, German doctors treated my eyes with injections and eye drops. Chinese nurses with cool hands rubbed my hot body with alcohol. After I was released from the hospital, I had to protect my eyes with dark glasses and a duck feather fan.

In mid-August Peggy and I made a three-day trip to the ancient and holy mountain, Tai Shan.<sup>47</sup>

We traveled up the six thousand granite steps in sedan-chairs, each one carried by two strong Chinese men.

*August 13: The mountain is so stripped by wind and weather and centuries that it lies naked in torn big pieces of bare rock. It is beyond the changes of seasons, has given up dressing in flowers or trees. The few flowers look poor and thin like ones on old graves. The trees stand in niches, are old, without needs and without wishes. As we ascend, we feel our thoughts beat in vain against the dead giant. "Oh, you dead, strong, old, deserted mountain, have mercy on us. And, even if the price must be being dead and old and deserted, teach us to be strong and eternal like you."*

*That night I seemed to sleep in the folds of the mountain god, Tai Shan. By noon the next day, after a thousand steps without stopping, we reached "the tower that touches upon emptiness." Nearby was a temple dedicated to a princess-goddess who had the power to give sons and heal eye trouble.*

*At the very top of the mountain the mist and clouds moved in*

*and out. The spot for me was the Stone of Meditation. It stood upright but broken by lightning into three parts. Five steps led up to it from four directions and a small stone bench surrounded it. Then the clouds and mist descended. For a moment the whole world was hidden. Nothing but one stone, I.*

In the fall Peggy and I headed back to Europe on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Peggy had wanted to stay longer, but I had a dream in Peking (Beijing) that I should go back. During the thirteen days on the train, I wrote in my journal as I remembered backward day by day.

When I arrived at the Prieure, I weighed only ninety pounds. When Gurdjieff saw how very thin I was, he said, "Should eat pound butter every day."

In October 1931, I wrote to Paquet: *Words cannot possibly describe the changes here. It is quieter than ever, and there are no plans except in what G. calls his "maniacal brain." I sigh and wish for New York. How should I understand that I descended again from Tai Shan and left the western hills behind Beijing?*<sup>48</sup>

My arrival came just two days before Gurdjieff and his tail were to sail for America. I tried to get a cabin on Gurdjieff's boat to New York but there was none left. Unexpectedly, on a Paris street, I ran into my friends Willem Nyland and his artist wife Ilonka Karasz just back from Java. The Dutch-Hungarian couple bought me a ticket on another ship, so I could travel with them to America. When Gurdjieff received my wire that I was on my way to New York, he said, "I only wish for her and she is here."

Two months later on January 15, 1932, when Gurdjieff left New York on the 5'. S. *Bremen* bound for Cherbourg, I was with him. So were Mme. de Salzmann, Nick Putnam, Nona Pietkowsky, and Payson Loomis.<sup>49</sup>



# Hotel Astor

TIMES SQUARE  
New York

FRED A. MUSCHENHEIM

January 12, 1932.

Miss Louise Goepfert

To Hotel Astor Travel Bureau Dr.

S/S BREMEN, sailing from New York to Cherbourg,  
January 15th, 1932; six first-class steamship  
tickets, as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Single Outside Cabin</u>	<u>Ocean Fare</u>	<u>U.S. Revenue Tax</u>	<u>French Port Tax</u>	<u>Total</u>
✓ Mr. G. Gurdjief	#240*	\$300	\$5	\$5	\$310
✓ Miss Louise Goepfert	#3	260	5	5	270
✓ Madame Jeanne de Salzmann	#5	260	5	5	270
✓ Madame Nona Pietkowsky	#7	260	5	5	270
✓ Mr. Nik Putnam	#9	260	5	5	270
✓ Mr. Payson Loomis	#11	260	5	5	270
T O T A L . . . . .					\$1,860

Received Payment

*S. B. Galchstein*  
*John D. B. Keating*

Receipt from six first-class steamship tickets from NY to  
Cherbourg on S. S. Bremen, Jan 15, 1932

## Chapter 7

# Last Days at the Prieure

Despite the generosity of many people, Gurdjieff was not able to raise enough money to keep the Prieure. The period after our last trip to America was one of uncertainty and confusion. The following are edited entries of the journal I kept during the final days at the Prieure in the spring of 1932.<sup>50</sup>

*Saturday, April 30: Gurdjieff, returning unusually early from the Tur<sup>^</sup>kish baths, comes up to the Monks' Corridor carrying an empty suitcase. I hear him talking to others in a loud commandeering voice. When he asks where Miss Sausage is, I open my door instantly. He says, "Mees, where your Beelzebub? Must go into trunk. Quick, quick. Every page must get in. Nothing can stay." Then he leaves to collect Mme. de Salzmann's and Litt's copies of the book. The devils seem to push him. I sense something terrible. Fearing Gurdjieff will burn Beelzebub as he has often threatened to do, I hide "War" and "Purgatory," the two chapters which I've worked on intensively, in my garment bag. Then it occurs to me that someone may search my room. I transfer my treasured chapters to the safer cupboards in the hall.*

*When I meet Mme. de Salzmann in the hall she says, "Do quiet yourself." I make the effort and reach a sort of calm.*

*At dinner the possibility of Gurdjieff reading my thoughts occupies me. What does he intend? What will he do?*

*He reminds Miss Gordon, "Tomorrow night Crayfish Party. Will need two English zeros." (Gurdjieff sometimes referred to money as "zeros." "Two English zeros" meant at least £100.)*

*She laughs and takes it lightly so he turns to me and makes me the go-between, exactly as he has done before. He*

does so as if I know his ways. He gives me an open and kind look, but adds that this is the last Saturday, the last Armagnac.

After dinner, Miss Gordon comes into my room. She feels that the Prieure is described in Gurdjieffs creation story in the "Purgatory" chapter. It is her opinion that the Prieure has now reached the lowest note and that we have to do something about it. I rarely contradict her, but now I voice my opinion that this should have happened long ago, and that any change could come only with and from Mr. Gurdjieff,

Sunday, May 1: The kitchen is officially closed. The general mood is as if the Alps are sitting on our chests. Everyone looks grim. What will be? I search and search, and before noon I decide that if nothing changes I will wait here for three days and then leave.

Mr. Gurdjieff sits, both morning and afternoon, at the little round table on the terrace overlooking the garden, but there is no black coffee next to him, as has been the long-established habit, and no one goes near him.

Finally Miss Gordon, just back from six months away, approaches him because she has not yet gotten a pass card. About a week ago Mr. Gurdjieff devised a plan whereby no one could enter or leave the Prieure without a pass card signed by his nephew Valia. Gurdjieff tells Miss Gordon of the enormous expenses he has, how much we all have cost him. He says no one was there to help him. He refers again and again to money and zeros, and finally gives her a pass for one week.

Gurdjieff orders Valia to tell each and every person that the Prieure will be closed in one week, Paradou [a separate building which housed some of the Prieure residents] in two. Everything will be boarded up.

Monday, May 2: One talks with the others, one thinks alone, and one suffers.

## Travels

Lili says she can't understand what is happening. She suggests it is Mr. Gurdjieffs duty to continue working with his pupils. Miss Gordon seems to think that this is just one of his incomprehensible plays. She waits quietly and sleeps well. Metz thinks it is all a manipulation so Miss Gordon will give money. Sophie Ivanovna, Gurdjieffs sister, who has mended, cleaned, and washed for him, seems to suffer most visibly. Some people, less close to Gurdjieff, threaten him with lawsuits and even bodily harm.

I finally come to see that this is the logical end of the whole last phase of the Prieure. Gurdjieff makes the end. He makes the end, or does he make a pause—for short, or forever? Is that not his right? Has he not given much, so much? Have I taken enough? Objectively, I feel it is better that he sends me away than that I go myself. Can it be that there is to be no more exchange between him and me? This seems like death, but only from my side. Haven't we all been in his way for a long time?

What will I do? Will I go on another trip to Asia to look for at least bits of truth here or there? Would I marry? Wouldn't marriage be too difficult without the existence of the Prieure where I could come from time to time? How can my life continue without the best it had, hard as it was?

But concretely, what am I to do? If I have to leave, how will I leave? Can I accept and bend my head, "The Lord has given, the Lord has taken away, " I will go to Gurdjieff and take my leave. Then, it will become clear if he means us all to go, or if he has different plans for different people.

Tuesday, May 3: I take the train to Paris. I am collected, though both stomach and nerves feel poorly. I go straight to the Cafe de la Paix. It is eleven o'clock. Gurdjieff sits alone. When he sees me, a sharp electric spark passes between us. He motions me to sit down. After a few unsuccessful attempts to speak, I hear my trembling voice saying, "I have come to say

## The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949

goodbye to you." What a release! I have said it. I sit very calmly.

Gurdjieff with a good and, so to say, touched look replies, "You are very kind."

"I very kind? "

"Yes, you musted be hated me, be angry." Gurdjieff makes fist.

"I must?" I ask.

"Not must, but so is man. I do not wish know, I do not ask. I know now there in the Prieure some hate me. Make worst man of me, I do so and so. They not know how much they cost me, even their shit. To take away their shit, .5000 francs a year. Or, as example, Lili—such political situation, I pay 200,000 francs every year to keep spies away. She does not know of course. You, truth, in work almost full honor, and you also only one mouth to feed. That already better. Work and one mouth. Others, four or five mouths. Yes, of course, you do not know what I did for them. You many things not know."

In very quiet and serious tone, Gurdjieff continues, "I have given them what I could. I not obliged to pay always for many mouths. They must see what life is, how difficult earn bread. I work for them day and night. Here I am, all alone, always alone. There at the Prieure are all the others. One hand wash other hand. I, one hand, cannot go on wash other hand if other hand does not wash, does not wish wash."

After a pause when he doesn't speak, my voice breaks, full of tears, "I thank you very much."

After a time he says, "Perhaps, very perhaps, I go back to the Prieure today. Can go late train, six-forty? Be so kind. Come cafe six o'clock; then perhaps we go together motorcar Fontainebleau. Depends upon different things."

I have lunch with my old German friend, Dr. Picht. Afterwards I rest on his sofa. Outside tired, but keep face.

## Travels

*Inside tired unto death. A clear recognition: for one's "friends," it is really sufficient to be pleasant and listen, while holding all one's inner intensive experiences to oneself. After the rest I thank Picht, who says, "I wish you would have slept."*

*"But I rested and am rested," I reply,*

*I return to the Cafe de la Paix in a heavy rain at quarter to six, but Gurdjieff is not there. I order a port and wait. At a quarter to seven Gurdjieff appears with a man from a real estate agency, I believe. Gurdjieff says he can't come back to the Prieure tonight. He tells me, "Go soon, catch train."*

*Looking back as I go through the cafe door, I see Gurdjieff waving. I stop a moment, not knowing if it is pure goodbye-waving or means I should come back. Seeing my uncertainty, he motions me to go on,*

*In the subway I stand pressed among many people and feel tears running down my cheeks. Am I still one of them? On the train back to the Prieure, I quiet down and even reach a clearness of mind.*

*Wednesday. May 4: I start making order, packing. Gurdjieff phones to say he will come tonight or tomorrow morning. He asks if anyone has left yet.*

*Thursday. May 5: In the morning I go to the Nouvelles Galleries in Fontainebleau to buy a sailor's bag. Then I come back to pack.*

*Gurdjieff comes from twelve to two. He calls Miss Gordon to him to tell him the news. He gives Mme. de Salzmann some commission to do in Fontainebleau. Then my turn comes.*

*He asks, "How you, Mees?"*

*"I'm finished."*

*"What means finished?"*

*"Packed."*

*"When you go?"*

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"This afternoon."

"Where you go?"

"Germany."

"You have money?"

"Yes, I borrowed some."

Gurdjieff says, "I thought of it. I wanted give you."

"Thank you, but it's not necessary. I have enough."

Sitting down, drawing nearer, he says, "You know, I want go Germany too. Perhaps I come soon, and if you are not 'in galoshes' then, you help me again."

["In galoshes," one of Gurdjieffs often-used expressions, meant to have one's freedom of action hampered in some way, just as wearing heavy galoshes impedes one's movement while walking. Gurdjieff sometimes indicated the degree to which one's freedom was restricted by saying someone was "in galoshes up to navel" or "up to chin" or even "up to eyebrows." In this context, Gurdjieff used "in galoshes" to mean being married. The *wordgalosha* is used in Russian for footwear, but also for "a mess, a fix, or an unpleasant situation." *Khaloshes* in Yiddish has only the second meaning.]

I reply, "Certainly."

He continues, "I promise you one thing. I will not touch Beelzebub such as you made it. You will find it again, Unless unforeseen happens, no page will be touched. How much you still rework of first book?"

"Sixty pages 'Art.'"

"How long you need to finish?"

"Three or four days with Lili and Mme. de Salzmann."

"I ask you." This is the only time he speaks in loud voice.

"You, you first, others later."

I say again, "Three or four days perhaps."

"How much for Warning?"

"For this I need the new English version."

*Last Days at the Prieure*

"How long with English ? "

"Perhaps two weeks."

"Mees, I ask you, can you stay till Monday? Finish 'Art.' Take all Beelzebub up to room. I come Saturday. I wish talk to you. Then we will see. Can you stay in conditions as they are? Without kitchen?"

I answer, "Yes."

"So good then."

I return to my room, push trunks away, and clean my room. I open Beelzebub, feel I have my right hand again.

Friday, May 6: I work, as always, the whole day. Finish "War" and write all these notes. Very clear in head. What a true book is Beelzebub.

Saturday, May 7: At dinner Gurdjieff is the perfect host, He has a very gay light tone. Dr. Stjoernal and Svetchnikoff make toasts to the idiots. Everything is like always—from the outside.

There is a fire in the salon, I sit on my feet. Mr. Gurdjieff asks whether I sat that way before knowing Goornahoor Harharkh. I say, "I must disappoint you," He says, "Why disappoint? I only ask for statistics."

[In *Beelzebub's Tales*, Goornahoor Harharkh, Beelzebub's wise and learned friend from Saturn whose exterior form resembles a raven, relaxed by letting the whole weight of his body rest on his lower extremities.]

I notice that I understand more Russian today. My head seems very clear. "The lamp burns bright when wick and oil are clean,"

Sunday, May 8: Altogether I breathe very grateful for this week.

I say, "This week was an eternity."

Lili says, "Not for me. For me just a moment."

Monday, May 9: I work all day on "Art." Gurdjieff comes back in the evening. He calls everyone on the Monks'

## *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949*

*Corridor to come and eat with him. Miss Gordon and Mme. de Salzmann go but I am not well enough.*

*As for me, I try to find out why Gurdjieff in his essence has been and still is, for me, beyond good and evil. That means Good and never to be judged by me, even though there seems to be evidence that he is the worst man I have ever known. Will it become clear to those whose belief is "Follow him, obey him, and everything will be right," that the opposite view, "Gurdjieff gives an example how you should not do it," goes just as far?*

*I join everyone in the salon after dinner. Gurdjieff plays music on his harmonium for a long time. While sitting there I know that Gurdjieff is the person I honor and love most of all men, and for whom I would wish to do something even when not with him. I ask, in a fitting place, "Can I do anything for you?"*

*He answers, "Now only money, money. One hundred thousand francs I need at once."*

*Tuesday, May 10: Gurdjieff returns to Paris and takes part of the French version of Beelzebub, as much as is typed well, with him.*

*Wednesday, May 11: Miss Gordon goes to Paris to give Gurdjieff a check. She tells him Sophie Ivanovna is leaving. He comes back the same night, but Sophie and Gyorgi have already gone. Gone, with much luggage, excited, sad, around seven o'clock in the evening. The children went with them to the station.*

## Chapter 8

# After the Prieure

After the Prieure closed in the spring of 1932, I spent the summer with my friend Peggy in Gstaad, Switzerland. December found us in Berlin. It was Nazi Germany in the early 1930s. One night I attended a speech by Goebbels, Hitler's minister of propaganda, in which he condemned what I considered real art and glorified non-art. His pronouncements greatly disturbed me.

In the midst of this madness, I saw across the crowd a tall man I had met in 1929 in New York. An architect, I thought, but I couldn't remember his name. So it was that I renewed my acquaintance with Walter March.

Walter had recently returned from the United States where he had intended to study with Frank Lloyd Wright. Unfortunately, Taliesin, Wright's school of architecture, had just burned down, so Walter had come back to Germany.

The Marches were prominent in Berlin society. Two streets in Berlin, Sophienstrasse and Marchscrasse, were named after their family. Walter's father was well known as "architect to the Emperor." At this time, Walter was assisting his brother Werner, also an architect, in designing the Olympic Stadium complex for the 1936 games.

As I got to know Walter better, I found him a sensitive and refined man working in what I considered the ideal profession. I thought he was the best possibility to share a life with, and Walter, feeling somewhat displaced, was ready for a nest of his own. On November 10, 1933, Walter and I married and set up housekeeping in Berlin.

Only then, married and in my thirties, did my wish to have children appear. It wasn't only biological as it is with most people. I was convinced that it was necessary to start

## The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949

from birth to produce a man different from ordinary unconscious man. I wished to have children to bring them up as seed beds for a soul.

After the Prieure was sold in 1933, Gurdjieff came to visit us in Berlin. I picked him up at the Charlottenburg Bahnhof. When I gave him the choice of staying with us or in a hotel, he said he preferred a hotel. He thought our apartment wouldn't have enough space for all the people he expected to come to see him. While Gurdjieff was in Berlin, Walter and I saw him almost daily.

When Gurdjieff was ready to go to New York, Walter and I bought Gurdjieffs boat ticket. After he returned from this trip in 1935, stories circulated among his students about shenanigans with his passport. According to one tale, Gurdjieff threw his Nansen passport in the Hudson River. All I know for sure is that he returned to Germany on a German passport which he hadn't had before.

Gurdjieff came to see Walter and me, now established in the home Walter had designed for us in the fashionable district, Berlin Dahlem. Gurdjieff brought with him a letter he had written to my son, who had been born the previous December. Gurdjieff had had the brief note to "my dear God-given son" transcribed into German. It read in part: *I would like to give you a little present. Here are a watermelon from South America and some sweets/row North America. I would like to give you something more worthwhile, but I don't know you yet. Until I do, I am sending you a small American check. With this little bit, you can buy some toys or whatever else suits you. Once I know you personally, I will certainly give you a much more worthwhile present.* <sup>51</sup>

Elizabeth Gordon also came to visit us in Berlin. Later she

## After the Prieure

joined Gurdjieff who, by 1936, was established in Paris where he lived throughout the war years.

These were difficult years in Germany. I could smell war in the air. I was discomfited by the atmosphere in a country where people greeted each other with "*Heil Hitler*" instead of "*Guten Morgen*" or "*Gruss Gott.*" It pained me to recognize that the innate urge within every man for a guide or teacher was working here in a totally false direction. Even those people who had not fallen prey to the general tendencies in Nazi Germany grappled in the dark and could only passively endure the general mass psychosis.

Personally, Walter and I were living a risky existence. Walter was very much a Berliner, but he was also an American citizen. We intended to move to the United States immediately after the Olympics in the new stadium. When our mail was intercepted, the authorities discovered that I had a Swiss bank account. A friend of mine had opened it for me so I wouldn't be penniless if I wanted to get out of Germany. I was arrested and later released.

When we were offered very good seats at the Olympic Games, I said, "Make sure they're not on Hitler's side or we might be bombed." Not long afterward we left for America.

When Walter and I arrived in the United States in 1936, we rented a house in West Nyack, New York. I soon wrote to Frankfurt to persuade my sister Maria and her family to join us in America. I hoped they would get out of Europe before the war, but they decided to remain in Germany. When Peggy, now married and with a baby daughter, came to America to wait for her husband to return from Europe, I persuaded the owner of the house next door to us to rent it to her. She brought with her some of the furniture Walter and I had left in Germany.

## *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949*

Once settled, Walter and I began a serious search for country property where we could set up a creative household for raising our family normally—in conditions unlike the "abnormally established conditions of being-existence" described in *Beelzebub's Tales*.

In February 1937 I received a letter from Elizabeth Gordon in Paris with news of Lili Chaverdian, Jane Heap, and herself. Of Gurdjieff and Mme. de Salzmann, she wrote:

*Mr. Gurdjieff is in Paris, of course, otherwise there would be no reason for my being here. He has just been down to Cannes taking myself and the party of Americans who now make up his tail! We were away for a week and had a wonderful time. Much sun, mountain air, and driving. The latter is not quite so hair-raising as it used to be. You, being used to hectic driving yourself, I don't suppose ever minded it.*

*Mme. de Salzmann [who, after Mr. de Salzmann's death in 1933, had gone to Geneva, Switzerland] is now in Paris with the children. She has taken a house at Sevres and several of her pupils live there too. She has a studio in Paris where she gives lessons. It is too bad having to start again at the beginning, because it is always hard work building things up. But Geneva, though she was very successful up to a point, wasn't really promising enough, so she decided on coming up here.*

*I am forgetting to ask you one thing that is very important. The whole of the German copy of Beelzebub is complete with the exception of the first chapter. Do you know anything about that or have you a copy? We went through the material of all the books some time ago and found it missing and Mr. Gurdjieff is anxious about it,*<sup>52</sup>

In 1939 Gurdjieff made his last trip to America before World War II. I took my five-year-old son and two-year-

old daughter into the Hotel Wellington in New York City to see him. He also came out to visit us in West Nyack.

My little daughter was somewhat wary of strangers, but Gurdjieff was so charming and gentle with her that she even let him pick her up out of the car.

Not long after Gurdjieffs departure for France, Walter and I found the property we had been looking for—a three-hundred-acre dairy farm in Bloomingburg, New York, not far from the New Jersey border. The beautiful property with gentle hills, woods with deer, and rolling fields bordered the Shawangunk River. [Shawangunk is pronounced SHON-gum.]

Below the large farmhouse was a pond with a waterfall. We envisioned eating our meals there in good weather—under the spreading branches of the nearby tree.

Before we moved to Spring Farm, our name for the Bloomingburg property, Walter redesigned the farmhouse inside and out. It was an immense transformation that included a huge, all-wood kitchen that opened onto a brick patio facing the pond. The spacious house with its large porches and appealing multilevel roof maintained the integrity of the old while incorporating the beauty of the new.

Walter embellished the practical architectural design with a number of fanciful details. The upper part of the window on the west wing was constructed to look like an angel's wings. The curved white plaster ceiling in the library was decorated to resemble the interior of an Eastern mosque. Embroidered textiles covered the dining room walls.

By the fall of 1939 Walter, I, and my two children (George and Sophia) were settled on the beautifully renewed Spring Farm. This completed my shift to full-

## *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949*

fledged family activity that began when I married. Here, in the comfortable three-story house framed by shrubbery, roses, and tiger lilies, my three other children (Prita, John, and Sylvia) were born.

Over several years, a way of living organically with common sense and practicality developed. Spring Farm became a sort of Noah's Ark. Our life corresponded to our aim to provide our children with an environment in which they could live close to nature and participate in the work of the farm easily and naturally.

I still have numerous photographs of the children dating from the war years at Spring Farm. Barefoot or clad in sandals or leather shoes laced above the ankles, they sit in child-sized chairs or play with carts, wagons, and tricycles. They dig potatoes or drive a tractor. Sometimes they are pictured with their riding horses, or picnicking or picking blueberries. Often one or more dogs appear in the background.

We had our holidays and festivals too. The family took many trips into the nearby Shawangunk Mountains. Once a year we traveled to Long Island to let the children live with the ocean for a time. Each August at the gala party that marked Walter's and my birthdays we festooned the porches with lanterns. When the new barn that Walter had designed, European in style with a balcony for corn, was complete, we had a great celebration with much unusual food and an Armenian chorus.

The seven years we lived on Spring Farm full-time were my busiest. I was solely responsible for the kitchen vegetable garden and the cooking. With five children I was constantly on call. As they grew older, I undertook to teach them the basic reading and writing skills at home before sending them to public school. When our hired

men were drafted into the army, I had to help in the dairy operation too. Fortunately, I was at the height of my physical stamina. During those years at Spring Farm, I was sustained by an inner stability gained from my time with Gurdjieff. When the children made up pet names for everyone in the family, they chose "Quiet Lady" for me, because each morning I sat in stillness in the alcove on the second-story porch.

As I tried to apply what I had learned from Gurdjieff within our family, I came to believe that the right education of children is one of life's most difficult tasks. At Spring Farm I struggled to live what I understood to be the fundamental principle of right education: to respect the individuality of each life without imposing my expectations on the child.

I questioned, how to teach the children to obey without making too many rules? How to provide activities which challenge their ingenuity? How to protect them from the many automatic and dulling impressions of the modern world? How to help each child to find his or her own interest? How to foster honesty? The list of questions was endless. I learned that it isn't easy to love even one's own children rightly. I accepted the fact that to be a mother is to have a bad conscience.

Gurdjieff often said, "For us 'impossible' does not exist." I found that when I had a question I couldn't answer or a difficulty I couldn't accept or overcome, reading *Beelzebub's Tales* brought me the necessary help.

On Spring Farm we did not live in isolation as most modern families do. We had frequent contact with people associated with Gurdjieff. Peggy Flinsch and her children stayed with us for two or three years. The C. S. Notts with their two boys spent a few summers with us. Willem and Ilonka Nyland, Joseph and Carla Binder (who had

relocated to the United States from Austria in 1936), and Fred Leighton visited the farm for shorter periods. A number of people, including my friend Gela, attended my Sunday morning readings of *Beelzebub's Tales*.

After the war was over, in our continuing search for right education, we spent the long winter season in New Mexico where the March, Flinsch, and Naumer families undertook a cooperative school venture for our children. We combined studies of a practical nature, such as cooking, with the academic subjects children usually learn in school. We explored the festivals and traditions of the Southwest Indians.

When our family returned to the East Coast, we took a second residence in New York City. There Walter hoped to reestablish his architectural career which had languished during the war years when he was a full-time farmer. As soon as I was able, I brought my widowed mother from Germany to the United States. We continued to spend our weekends at Spring Farm where we had a tenant farmer who later bought the property from us.

## Chapter 9

# Gurdjieffs Last Visit to New York

During World War II, Gurdjieff and a few of his students lived and worked in Paris. When the war ended, communication with Gurdjieff from our side of the Atlantic began again. In 1947, when P. D. Ouspensky died, Mme. Ouspensky sent her key people to Gurdjieff in Paris.

Then, in December 1948, Gurdjieff returned to America. Shortly after his arrival, he visited Mme. Ouspensky, now bedridden, at Franklin Farms—the country property in Mendham, New Jersey, that the Ouspenskys had acquired in 1942 for their work. Gurdjieff wanted to bring the "Ouspensky people" living around Mme. Ouspensky in contact with the dozen or so "Gurdjieff people," most of whom had come from the original Orage groups. Many of the Ouspensky people had visited Gurdjieff, either in the 1920s at the Priore or later in Paris. During the winter of 1948-49, as a result of Gurdjieffs visit to Franklin Farms, Lord and Lady Pentland, Christopher Fremantle, Aubrey Wolton, and Tom Forman came frequently to Gurdjieffs suite at the Hotel Wellington in New York City.

Alfred Etievant had been sent to New York a week before Gurdjieff to teach us some of the Movements, or sacred dances. We practiced every day, sometimes twice a day. I learned that one can begin to understand the Movements only by doing them.

One evening as I was leaving the studio in Carnegie Hall where the Movements were practiced, Gurdjieff came toward me in the hallway. He asked, "Where go? What do?" exactly as he had done twenty years before when we met for the first time in the very same place. I

stood stock still, immobilized. He said, "You astonished my memory?" Gurdjieff had or was *the* memory of this Earth of ours. He once called himself her "patron saint," but such memory of a personal character, too!

Now Alfred was the kitchen boy in Gurdjieffs hotel suite. He had to prepare the vegetables, salads, rice, bulgur, and potatoes. Alfred worked and sweated. He had barely enough time to sleep. He was an all-demands-fulfilling, ever-ready helper for Gurdjieff.

Meals at Gurdjieffs New York table were as ceremonious as ever. The ritual of the toasts to the idiots still accompanied every meal. The only table decoration was a glass filled with tarragon, dill, and spring onions. The herbs, along with all kinds of smoked fish, were eaten with the fingers when the Armagnac was poured. Gurdjieff never permitted flowers as table decorations. He stormed, "Nonsense of flowers spoils food."

Gurdjieff himself still went shopping, as he had done on his previous visits, at the fresh meat and vegetable markets. As before, melons were served regardless of the season. Now, on this last visit, every meal began, after the obligatory fresh herbs, with avocado halves served with salt and pepper, and sometimes with olive oil as well. When avocados couldn't be found in the New York markets, friends sent them from South America.

It was my task to bring the luncheon meat dish, mainly fried chicken or Hungarian goulash, every day from our house on West 88th Street to Gurdjieffs hotel.

Sometimes people came to his table and said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, but I've just eaten." Gurdjieff replied, "Doesn't matter. Come, sit, eat again. Stomach made of rubber."

After every luncheon a chapter from a draft of Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* was read. Mme. Ouspensky had sent it to Gurdjieff with the question,

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"Should it be published?" Gurdjieff praised it often, "Very exact is. Good memory. Truth, was so." Sometimes Gurdjieff was dissatisfied. "Is too liquid. Lost something."

The same meal ritual was repeated at dinner. An English woman from Mendham, with a restaurant in New York, supplied the required dinner. "New people" could be brought for the evening meal. Mme. de Salzmann had the task to decide who should sit at Gurdjieffs table.

Gurdjieff was always very attentive to his guests. He recognized which type they were by how they responded to the drinking of toasts and by which category of idiots they chose for themselves. Which idiot would they choose? Arch Idiot? Zigzag Idiot? Doubting Idiot? Enlightened Idiot? Squirming Idiot? Super Idiot? Gurdjieff himself was always the last idiot, Unique Idiot.

As each idiot was toasted, it was described. None was as impressive as the fourth toast, "To the health of all Hopeless Idiots." The explanation had to come from someone who had been trained at Gurdjieffs table in Paris. "And there are Objective Hopeless Idiots and Subjective Hopeless Idiots. The first will die like dirty dogs, we cannot drink to them. The second can learn to work on themselves and finally may give up a soul."

Sometimes, while still at the Prieure, I had had to take the idiot that was not represented otherwise. In later years I was usually toasted as one of the "Round Idiots, those that never stop, but day-night-year-round continue." Another person was toasted as "Square Idiot, he stops, comes to himself, at least to his four corners." I still remember many of Gurdjieffs students and friends by the category of idiots to which they belonged.

For a long time I had been interested in whether I liked or disliked people in the same category of idiot as myself.

J. G. Bennett, who had met Gurdjieff very early and spent a little time at the Prieure, had been away from Gurdjieff for many years. Now, in the last few years of Gurdjieff's life, Bennett returned to Gurdjieff's table and pronounced himself Gurdjieff's oldest pupil. When Bennett was put into the Round Idiot category, the same as me, it sat badly with me.

Gurdjieff brought endless shades of meaning to these lessons in typicality. I had thought that Compassionate Idiots were all positive, but now Gurdjieff differentiated among several types of Compassionate Idiots. He described one type who was compassionate only when he knew that his fiancée's family was watching him. Only then would he give generously to the beggar who accosted him.

In the last years, when the number of idiots had shrunk from twenty-one to eighteen, Gurdjieff emphasized that as everyone ordinarily "exists," one automatically moves up the list mechanically—but with work on oneself, one moves down. This going down, even out, was a new addition to Gurdjieff's ever-developing, deepening science of idiots. I heard him declare only one person as "going out of idiocy." That was Mme. de Salzmann.

I daresay the great science of the idiots died with Gurdjieff.

Over the years with Gurdjieff, an understanding developed: anything that was said or that happened to *anyone* at his table was for *everyone* present. Each one's faults, blindnesses, and refusals were everyone's. This understanding stretched and purified each one listening.

Visitors from America often brought Gurdjieff sad tales about other people's trials and tribulations. When they did, Gurdjieff lightly changed the perspective with a wave of his hand. He'd say, "So and so long operation had, so and so great worry. But still *is*—still has body."

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Once Gurdjieff opposed the divorce of one of his students. He said, "Better unhappy marriage than no marriage." (Over the years I came to feel that marriage can be a hard, bitter school for some people, but I've seen how work can make an unhappy marriage a useful one, sometimes even a happy one. See what happens in oneself. Honor what the other has.)

Gurdjieff was a host as no other on earth. Besides the best food and drink, he gave food for thought: stories, impressions - so clear! - precise, unforgettable, in picture form.

Gurdjieff told this story: One night in an Eastern country, a wife notices that her husband is tossing and turning in bed. After a while she asks, "Why are you so restless? Why can't you sleep?" The husband replies, "I don't have the money to pay our rent tomorrow." The wife jumps out of bed, opens the window, leans out, and shouts to the landlord, "Hey so and so, my husband can't pay the rent tomorrow. Now you worry and he can sleep."

Gurdjieffs favorite story was about three Englishmen who climb a mountain in Switzerland. They puff hard but see nothing on their way. When the first one arrives on top of the mountain, he says, "I think it will rain." A half an hour later the second one arrives. He looks around and says, "I think it will not rain." In another half an hour the third one arrives and says, "I don't like all this talk."

This story was served as surely and distinctly as French Armagnac and always brought laughter. The telling, accentuated by Gurdjieffs superb ability to mime, was drawn out, and had nuances that changed from day to day. For instance, one day he said, "In *Baedekers*, English read, 'Musted be seen such mountain,' so they set out."

He also told about the Scot travelling on a train. At every station he jumped out of the train and returned only

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as the train began to pull out of the station. Finally his travelling companions asked him discreetly, "What is wrong with you? Do you have bladder trouble?" "No," the Scot answered. "I buy my ticket from station to station."

Then there was the Irish grandfather who was taking a walk with his grandson. When they came to a river, they took off their shoes and socks. The grandson exclaimed, "Look how dark your feet are!" The grandfather answered, "Well, haven't I lived much longer than you?"

So—English stupid, Scots stingy, Irish dirty, but the deeper significance of the stories had to do with man's three centers. Ordinary man doesn't train his mind, he is shy and skimpy in his feelings, even to his nearest, and he neglects his body.

Throughout Gurdjieff's last visit to New York from December 1948 to February 1949, he gave special impressions to the children. They all sensed something in him which one child expressed as, "He looks different and is different from all other people." The following are edited entries of the journal I kept during that period.<sup>53</sup>

*Friday, December 17: Gurdjieff arrives in New York. In the afternoon I take all five of my children to see him at the Hotel Wellington. Walter is already there. We wait quietly in the living room.*

*The bedroom door opens and Gurdjieff—heavy, massive, imposing—walks out, looks at all. He walks right into this family of ours. The children are calm, watching him intently. I tremble. It seems that I have waited all my life for this moment.*

*Gurdjieff, who last saw my two older children in 1939*

## *Gurdjieffs Last Visit to New York*

*and has never met my three younger ones, wants to know the name and age of each child. Then he asks, "Who remembers me?" My oldest son nods. Gurdjieff looks at my daughter, "You not a little?" She, who was only two when she saw him last, shakes her head. "Would be better if you would remember me." He gives each child a candy, ever ready from his pocket, and two to my oldest son. The children are very impressed with the drinks to the idiots, especially the Hopeless Idiot, one kind of which "dies like a dog." Afterward the children question, "How does a dog die?" "How does a man die?" Gurdjieff tells each child to choose his or her own idiot.*

*Sunday, December 19: When we arrive for Sunday lunch, the door to Mr. Gurdjieffs bedroom is ajar. Dr. Welch's voice rings out. Mr. Gurdjieffs voice is faint, barely audible. The talk is about the man-machine. Dr. Welch repeats in loud voice what Mr. Gurdjieff seems to whisper to him. "All to be learned anew." "Cannot be done in one day." "Unlearning first necessary."*

*My eight-year-old daughter asks, "Does the doctor teach Mr. Gurdjieff?"*

*Her older brother who knows better replies, "Of course not. Mr. Gurdjieff teaches the doctor."*

*At lunch Gurdjieff asks her, "Maybe you will be doctor?"*

*She, who has often talked about it, shakes her thin French braids decidedly.*

*Mr. Gurdjieff questions her again, "Will you be doctor? Or sausage-maker? "*

*She, with more courage, "Yes, sausage-maker."*

*Mr. Gurdjieff, "Truth, much more understandable for child. So you start now. Observe, taste many sausages. Horse and chicken sausage. Camel sausage. All kinds. What goes in, what made from. Start with 'Sausage' from Frankfurt, If you learn science of sausages, you can understand many*

things. Also, why Germans in future will write book, why and the reasons 'Sausage' became Mr. Gurdjieffs helper and translator. Truth, such book will be written."

To me he says, "Sausage, I know your future. Good future. You not yet know. Wait until my book published. Then you see. World now two possibility have. Next war and half of mankind destroyed. Or publish my book. Then in Russia read about America, see their weakness. America read about Russia, see their weakness. And so with all nations. Then instead of hate, pity will arise. Pity for each and every one. Then desire arise help one another."

A few days later Mr. Gurdjieff asks one of my daughters, "How you call me? "

She answers, "Mr. Gurdjieff."

He takes her face in his hands. "What my nickname among you children?" She seems not to know. "Must tell me if you wish bonbon."

I tell him my younger son had called him "the real Santa Claus." This is to Mr. Gurdjieffs satisfaction.

Friday, December 24: Christmas Eve.

In preparation for the holiday, Gurdjieff asks me to buy flags from all the nations of the world. Then he has me construct an enneagram to hang as "our flag" amidst all the national banners.

[According to Gurdjieff the symbol of the enneagram expressed the Law of Seven and the Law of Three and reveals the steps and interactions in any process.

He said the enneagram was to be used, by those who knew its secrets to represent various processes in the physical, psychological, and spiritual worlds.]



*The enneagram I make is about twenty-four inches in diameter, of wire wrapped in metallic foil. The circle and*

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*triangle are of gold, the inner lines that connect the points 1—4—2-8—5—7 of silver. Sixteen small blue electric lights mark the nine points around the circle and the seven points where the inner lines cross.*

*Now the enneagram hangs shining on the wall above the green Earth with presents below that is in place of a Christmas tree.*

*My fourteen-year-old son is the only child at the small gathering in the evening. After dinner, around midnight, Gurdjieff gives advice. "I wish give rea[ Christmas present. Imagine Christ. Somewhere in space is,." Mr. Gurdjieff forms an oval with both his hands. "Make contact. Not to center, but to outside, periphery. Draw from there, draw in, L Settle in you, Am. Do every day. Wish to become Christ. Become. Be."<sup>54</sup>*

*Then the chapters "My Father" and "My First Teacher" from Mr. Gurdjieffs second series of writings, Meetings with Remarkable Men, are read. My older son, condensed and shining, is still able to hand out candies around four o'clock in the morning.*

*Saturday, December 2°): Christmas dinner at lunchtime.*

*Mr. Gurdjieff has invited the children, our five and others. A table is set for them in next room. My son is made director of toasts, responsible for announcing the idiots in the correct order.*

*All the March children have chosen their idiots. My older son has decided on Square Idiot for himself. One of my daughters chooses Arch but later regrets it. I ask, "Why?" She says, "Because too far away from Mr. Gurdjieff, dumber Eighteen." Another daughter, after inquiring whether Enlightened Idiot has anything to do with the light of her evening prayer, chooses that one. My younger son chooses Zigzag Idiot, because he likes zigzag as a form. My youngest daughter is Ordinary.*

*The two older children watch Movements for the first time.*

## The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949

The following evening Mr. Gurdjieff turns to my daughter, "Why sit and sleep? Do. Choose teacher. Work."

The daughter of two of Mr. Gurdjieffs pupils wants to learn to play the piano. Mr. Gurdjieff gives her all sorts of billfolds, much money. "For use in study. Must account for. Not spend on different things, so and so. Must know for what spend. Writedown,"

Looking toward another girl, eleven years old, Mr. Gurdjieff says, "She very good candidate for patriarchy. Must be watched in about two years. Not go left." It is said in a way that she can understand very little of it, but feels it is something she would wish to listen to in the future.

Saturday, January 1, 1949: Lunch. All my children except the youngest are here. Plus my older son's friend who very often comes along. After lunch Gurdjieff plays music on the harmonium. Then he gives each child a \$20 bill. "Do what you want with my present." To my son's friend—whose father died early and who has had a difficult childhood—Gurdjieff says, "She," (meaning me) "your second mother. I, your—what you wish to call me—great grandfather. Now you always will have,"

Thursday, January 6: Gurdjieff calls Three Kings' Day, "old day of Christmas." It is celebrated on January 7 with children's party. Twenty children there: five Marches plus friend, two Flinsches, two Doolings, two Welches, two Andersons, Mary Sinclair, two Nylands, two friends of Nylands, and Eve Toy lor Swaska.

Two plates are set in front of the children. On one there are shining silver dollars. On the other, paper dollars. Mr. Gurdjieff talks very slowly. "I old man. Not time have, go shopping presents. Children, I wish make you present. You can choose. Choose eight silver dollars—you know silver something real, always good—or ten paper dollars. Ten more than eight. If you wish buy something quickly, can choose

## Gurdjieffs Last Visit to New York

ten. Think from all sides. Not quick decision. Paper money, it can happen like in France. Some day, no good as money, only as wallpaper. Think, then choose. Your choice."

One little girl gets up impulsively, knowing she wants silver. Mr. Gurdjieff says, "Not so quick. Think again," Then he goes over the whole speech, in more detail than the first time. Most children choose silver dollars.

At the meal, Mr. Gurdjieff seems especially tired, with dark circles under his eyes. The children sit at a small table. I take a seat in the corner, opposite Mr. Gurdjieff, as there is no place at the main table. Mr. Gurdjieff angrily, "Why you sit there? Go to other room. Eat well. Here no place on table, how can you eat? "

I, semi-free, yet decided, "Sometimes such food isn't important. I wish to eat something else." I stay, and also get enough food.

Thursday, January 13 (the old Russian New Year): At lunch, Gurdjieff says, "We had enough Christmas. Christmas child'splay. Today is real Christmas, my birthday."

Calling me close to him, he says, "Tonight I baby." He drops his hands and head, his expression one of helplessness. In a special tone he says, "Let your children come here twelve o'clock midnight."

I speak to each child individually, "Tonight is Mr. Gurdjieffs birthday. Do you wish to sleep sweetly as always, or be awakened in the middle of the night and go with us to him?" Each one chooses enthusiastically to be wakened. In the early evening Walter and I go to the reading, return home at eleven-thirty. All children wake easily and dress warmly.

As we arrive at Mr. Gurdjieffs apartment, the first of many unusual toasts is just being proposed. Gurdjieff says, 'After fifty years of superhuman effort, let us drink to the one who gave most help, and will give most help for the coming actualization of all my labors—the great Beelzebub."

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*It is so crowded, we can hardly move. After the meal Gurdjieff gestures slightly to a five-year-old girl. She jumps up and stands close to him. He offers her a seat by his side. When she is settled, he says to her, "Will be queen, my helper, of some country. Not Germany."*

*She looks pleased at the word "helper." Mr. Gurdjieff looks deeply and strongly into her eyes. She feels the weight of his look and blinks while nodding.*

*Earlier he had tested whether my children knew the German song, "Blödsinn, blödsinn, du mein Vergnügen. Stumpfsinn, Stumpfsinn, du meine Lust." [Idiocy, idiocy, you are my pleasure. Stupidity, stupidity, you are my delight.] He tells them, "Must learn it. This important data. My children will rule world."*

*Then, just arrived by airplane from Germany, enters Kathryn Hulme, "Crocodile." This name was given to her eight or nine years ago on account of her thick and many-layered "skins." She steps forward. "Mr. Gurdjieff, may I tell the children a story in honor of your birthday? "*

*She tells long-windedly and sentimentally of a "poor girl, no parents, four years old," who came onto the airplane in Amsterdam, held her papers in one hand, money in the other, flew so high—eighteen thousand feet—to meet her new mother in New York. Crocodile repeats the story several times, each time in a voice choked with emotion, each time with more and more tears. "Poor girl, no parents, four years old."*

*It is impossible to stop her. "Poor girl, no parents, four years old." Her tears run freely. Mr. Gurdjieff hands her a handkerchief. Someone else gives her a second one. finally even a big tablecloth is handed to her. All roar with laughter. The children are especially happy about this theater.*

*Mr. Gurdjieff then gives a most important teaching to children. "To this story, children, and most stories, must*

## *Gurdjieff's Last Visit to New York*

behave outwardly polite, thank even, say "thanks, so-and-so"—but inwardly, not be touched, forget quickly. Now you saw Crocodile tears. Ask mere, pere, people you trust, what crocodile tears are. Very important to know. Crocodile tears, in one or two years you will understand."

When the handkerchiefs do not stop Crocodile, Mr. Gurdjieff orders strong coffee, with much milk and sugar, to be brought to her. When she talks yet again of "poor girl, no parents, four years old," Mr. Gurdjieff says, "If again say same thing, we all pay Crocodile money which she has to pay back later doubled." Finally he scolds her for giving such stuff and nonsense to "my children."

More music. One of my daughters, listening especially well, is struggling with tears, Mr. Gurdjieff, pointing to her, says, "Mathematically exact."

All leave at three o'clock in the morning,

Sunday, January 16: At luncheon, two children sit near Mr. Gurdjieff. Suddenly, toward the end of the meal, Mr. Gurdjieff speaks very strongly to the six-year-old boy sitting close to him, "You can never sit here, Never near me. You can come, but not sit near me." The child takes it in, pale, understands only half.

Mr. Gurdjieff asks his older sister who is nearby, "You understand why?" She nods.

Mr. Gurdjieff repeats to the boy, "For that, you cannot sit near me." He wants to fix it in him.

After the meal, the little boy goes to his mother in the big room and says, "I want to sit with you."

The mother sits on the couch, her son on one side, her daughter on the other. The little girl whispers to her mother, "I am not sure that I understand. Did he make a stink?"

Her mother replies, "Yes. Mr. Gurdjieff has very fine nose." To her son she says, "It's a pity you make him suffer." Big tears run down the small boy's cheeks. He fights them.

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As they go to say goodbye, Mr. Gurdjieff lets the sister kiss him on his mouth. He nods decidedly to the little boy, who nods back. The mother says to Mr. Gurdjieff, "This caused him tears."

Mr. Gurdjieff, "Necessary data I give him." She nods.

When the boy's older brother hears the story, he says, "That is just what he needs. Otherwise he lets his wind go and laughs loud."

Friday, February 4: My older son does Movements fairly often now. This evening, the circled "Hallelujah" is practiced in a new way. Mr. Gurdjieff has my son stand on a chair, arms bent from the elbows, for about ten minutes. Afterward he says, "I could have gone on for longer."

The next morning, when I'm alone with him, I ask my son, "Can you somehow say how you felt yesterday?"

He says, simply, humbly, "I felt a kind of god."

He has to repeat his role in "Hallelujah" another evening. There is a long wait for the Movement to begin and then it is shorter than the first time. When his part is finished, my son does not step down quickly from the chair, takes the chair away slowly. Mr. Gurdjieff shows displeasure. Then my son tries to lean the folded chair against a mirrored wall. Mr. Gurdjieff says, "No, not there. Necessary mentate a little."<sup>55</sup>

When I was at the Prieure, Gurdjieff often talked about his writings "having to be printed." Once he even drove to Leipzig to show me the place where his book should be published. At that time I understood "having to be printed" in a metaphoric sense that *Beelzebub* had to be printed in me: having to awaken in me the desire of my childhood when I pondered the meaning of Christ's commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself."

## *Gurdjieffs Last Visit to New York*

Now during his last visit to New York, Gurdjieff told some of his older students that it was time to publish his books in several languages. He decided that the first series, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson, or An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man*, should be printed first. If the book publishers weren't willing to finance its publication, we had to.

Christopher Fremantle contracted with E. E. Dutton to publish *Beelzebub's Tales*, but we had to guarantee the publishing house a certain amount of money. Those of us who helped pay for the publication were to get an inscription in the front of our copy of the book. At \$400 a copy, we were convinced that it would be the best buy we would ever make.

Aubrey Wolton was to assist me in preparing *Beelzebub's Tales* for publication. Every morning he came to my house where we checked spelling and punctuation. After two or so hours of exacting work, my mother would bring us her magic drink, a whipped blend of egg yolks, sugar, and cognac.

At any time a telephone call might come, "Gurdjieff has a commission for you. Please come quickly." I would drop everything to attend to him. He wanted to send money through a bank to his brother or sister or someone else in his big family. Or he wanted a "reminding letter" sent to so-and-so.

"By the way," said Gurdjieff toward the end of his stay in New York. His "by the way" was often the introduction to something very important. "By the way, I collect calves to invite to Paris for further education in Movements." Among these young women, calves not yet cows, was Frank Lloyd Wright's daughter, Iovanna. Wright, a man

## *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949*

used to having his own way, begged to have her remain with him until after his birthday, but Gurdjieff said, "No, has to be *now*." Wright replied, "I accept and leave—a humbled man."

In mid-February, Gurdjieff sailed back to Europe on the *Queen Mary*. Before the ship left, many of his students and their children crowded into his cabin. When Gurdjieff had arrived, he looked tired. I felt he wanted it over quickly. The Marches, Doolings, Flinsches, and the Anderson girl were there. Gurdjieff gave one girl litchi nuts and candies to pass out among the well-wishers. Then he bent down for kisses. I stood behind him to watch my children's faces.

The moon seemed to hang low. The whole Cosmos was felt. Gurdjieff departed. Would he come again?

A week later, after I repeated the prayer from the "Purgatory" chapter of *Beelzebub's Tales* at my daughter's bedside, she said, "I would give my life for Mr. Gurdjieff. Or my soul. And you, Mother?"

I replied, "I would give my skin."

## Chapter 10

# The Final Days

Not long after Gurdjieff returned to France in February 1949, he summoned me to Paris with a telegram that read "The author expects you." Arnold Keyserling (the second son of Hermann Graf Keyserling), who had come to Gurdjieff's table in Paris, was now translating Ouspensky's *In Search of the Miraculous* into German. I was needed to see that "our vocabulary" was kept correct. When could I free myself?

It was a hard task for me—how to settle my family and get away. One day as I was making arrangements to leave, one of my daughters asked me, "What is Mr. Gurdjieff doing?" Before I had decided how to answer her question, she said, "I know one thing. He is doing something with God. " After finding a German-speaking maid to assist her, I left my five children in the care of my dear old mother and sailed to France.

During the next six months, I undertook a series of tasks relating to the publication of *Beelzebub's Tales*. Gurdjieff sent me to Vienna to arrange for the German publication of the book: *All und Alles*. Every day I worked with a few released German war prisoners checking the galley proofs of the text. We corrected the punctuation of the material and the spelling of the many unusual and difficult words.

One day in my hotel lobby, by a stroke of luck, I overheard a few African missionaries speaking about the paper they had that was left over from their printing of the *Bible*. I arranged to get this very fine, almost translucent, paper for the German edition of *Beelzebub's Tales*,

I also had to resolve an awkward situation that had

developed with Arnold Keyserling's publishing house, Verlag der Palme, in Innsbruck. Gurdjieff had given money to Keyserling to print *Beelzebub's Tales*, but now it appeared that the money had been used to print a volume of poems by Keyserling's older brother.<sup>56</sup>

When I returned to Gurdjieff's Paris flat on Rue des Colonels Renard, he immediately sent me on an overnight trip to London to arrange the press releases for the English version of the book. Before I left, Gurdjieff said, "We wait lunch for you."

In London I worked deep into the night with people in the English groups considering the question, What to give to the press? My formulation of *Beelzebub's Tales* as "a cosmic fairy tale" was used in the press release. I was back in Paris by four o'clock the following afternoon for lunch at Gurdjieff's table.

In the fall, Gurdjieff sent me back to Vienna to continue work on the German edition. I left Paris with a concern about his deteriorating health. One of the former Ouspensky people kept me posted about his condition. When he entered the hospital, I was called back to Paris.

As I was flying over Stuttgart, on October 29, 1949, I knew: Gurdjieff had died. Upon my arrival in Paris, I called Mme. de Salzmann, and she confirmed the fact of his death. Together we went to the American hospital where his body lay. As Mme. de Salzmann and I stood beside him, I was reminded of the two Marys at the death of Christ.

The funeral service took place in the Russian Orthodox Church in the Rue Daru. The congregation stood, in absolute silence, for an hour waiting for the coffin to arrive. The priest at the church was struck by the congregation's composure. Later he asked, "What did

## *The Final Days*

this man Gurdjieff teach? For my whole life I've wanted a congregation like this."

Just as the funeral ended, the electric power in the church failed. In fact, the lights went out in that entire quarter of Paris. Was Gurdjieff making a little joke? He had said innumerable times, "When my teaching understood, will not be any more electric light."

Gurdjieff was buried in the Avon Cemetery between the graves of his wife and his mother, whose tombstones had bent toward each other.



**Gurdjieff Grave**

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**1950 Louise March**

Source unknown. Photo given to author by Louise March  
for inclusion in this book

## Afterword

In 1949 when the German edition of *In Search of the Miraculous* was published by Verlag der Palme, Arnold Keyserling and Louise March were listed as co-translators.

In 1950 the German edition of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*, entitled simply *All und Alles*, was published by Verlag der Palme, Keyserling's publishing house. The book's bright red cover was emblazoned with the company logo in gold. The beautiful blue-and-gray dust jacket was designed by Louise March's old friend Joseph Binder, the highly regarded Austrian-American artist.<sup>57</sup>

Concurrent with the publication of *All und Alles*, Louise March, while staying with her sister and brother-in-law at the Alte Miihle in Frankfurt, wrote and self-published a twelve-page pamphlet entitled "G. Gurdjieff: A Call for Attention to His Life and Work."

G · GURDJIEFF

G · GURDJIEFF

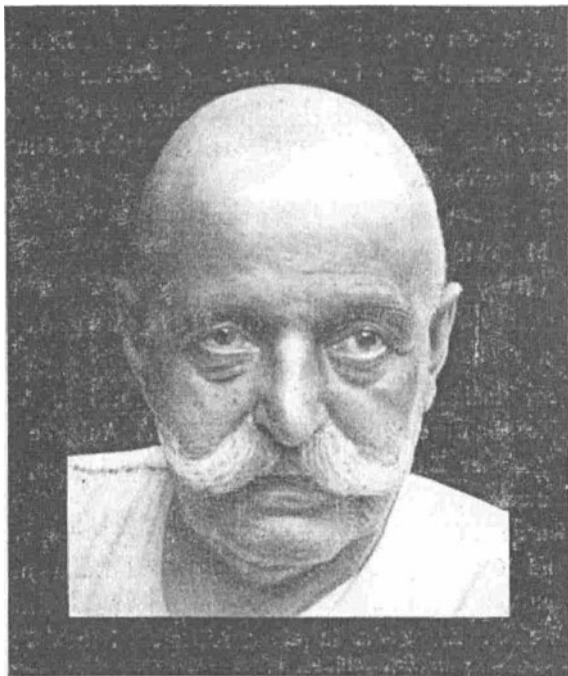
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ALL  
UND  
ALLES

*Beelzebubs Erzählungen  
für seinen Enkel  
Eine objektiv  
unparteiische Kritik  
des Lebens des Menschen*

**1950 Dust Jacket designed by Joseph Binder of 1950 German  
Edition of *All und Alles***

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# G. GURDJTEFF

EIN HINWEIS AUF SEIN  
LEBEN UND WERK

VON L O U I S E M A R C H

1950 Cover of Louise March Pamphlet;  
*G. Gurdjieff, His Life and Work*



**1950 The *Alte Mühle* where Louise March wrote pamphlet:**

*G. Gurdjieff, His Life and Work*

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# Appendix

## Return to the Mountains by Louise March

Giants of my childhood,  
You great mighty holy mountains,  
With dust on my feet from the plains below,  
Tired of much pilgriming,  
Dare I to present myself to you again?  
Will you test me for steadiness  
In all weathers and storms?  
Head upon shoulders,  
Feet upon earth,  
Only your measuring can measure me,  
Your measures I have never forgotten—  
    Kindly you are, you great and mighty ones,  
Today as before  
You permit rainbows  
To arch from your mountain springs.  
And, oh, to have had such compassion upon me:  
Sending one toward me  
In human form  
To receive me:  
Hair of your woods,  
Eyes of your lakes,  
Words of your winds,  
Heartbeat of your waters.  
Unexpected, undeserved,  
He came toward me  
In human form,  
Overpoweringly near  
In the kindness of his arms.

## In the Shade of Notre Dame by Louise March

In the shade of Notre Dame,  
On a bench beside you  
I forget all haste,  
All burdens.  
Unload all loads  
And tensions.

Sparrows hop from crumb to crumb,  
Pigeons delicately dine or gobble,  
While we are just sitting,  
"Watching and viewing,  
We forgo and forget everything.

These lovely lively merry sparrows:  
Two bicker and peck for scraps of food,  
One has fled with it to a lower branch.

These lovely grey iridescent pigeons  
Keep their cooing to themselves—  
Is it only in fairy tales that pigeons coo?  
Three have flown to the arm  
Of a crooked-nosed old woman  
Dressed in black:  
Slowly she raises her thumb, like a door,  
And three heads poke into her fist  
For some golden corn.  
They remain on her arm  
Till the other hand opens:  
They eat quietly, heads bobbing.

Children hop around us in the cold wind,  
Jump rope, play blind man's bluff,  
Search for a ball under our feet.  
The sparrows and pigeons hardly stir,  
As they pass. Nor do we,  
Wholly immersed as we are  
In the stir of life. 122

AN INTRODUCTION TO  
*THE TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD*

*Containing some suggestions as to the right method of reading  
Gurdjieffs Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*

by Louise March

It is the peculiarity of this text, as of all so-called secret texts, that its inner teaching can be understood only by practice, like a medicine which proves its usefulness only by being taken. Therefore, this introduction may indicate a method of approach to the book whereby the reader or listener can make profitable use of it. Since this teaching is to travel "by the path of the ear" into your inner self, your outer self should be put aside as if it were dead. As in death, the attention is drawn away from the physical body to a new focal point, so here, the chief aim of the text is to uproot man from his outer world and to awaken his real consciousness.

When the body "holds still" for the first time, unhindered by the usual habitual associations and desires, the consciousness, or "Knower" has the opportunity, in a sudden flash, to see itself as it were from within, to be able to weigh itself as to its own worth. This great "shock" is the first and best opportunity for it to take hold of itself and to attain what the text calls "liberation."

But in most cases the "consciousness" is too weak to look death in the face. It falls into a "swoon" from which it "wakes" as though in dream only after three and a half days. Throngs of gods—both peaceful and terrible—dawn on the "dead one." They impress and confuse his senses, blind and beset him with ever-new forms of light and terror. The text is a faithful guide each step of the way. It calls the pursuing forms by name, describes their qualities, retards their speed by descriptions, binds them

fast with prayers. In short, it becomes the saving interrupter, telling the pursued what these figures actually are—a kaleidoscope of his own ideas and impulses. They are not independent entities outside of him of which he needs to be afraid; they are only reflexes of his own thoughts and feelings.

The whole life, seeming finished at death, passes over into the dream world of straying bits and scraps of consciousness. The "dead one" sees his friends and relatives and calls to them but is unheard, which makes him suffer dreadfully. He sees his possessions used, and misused, by others which greatly upsets him. He goes back again and again to his lost body and finally longs for a new one. He is driven hither and thither, falls into deep depressions, and can change nothing. He has the same reactions as in life, nothing but reactions, where it is *action* alone which could save him. The text is constantly advising him to take this step—the step away from himself, away from the sympathies and antipathies which direct him, away from the bonds of habits and inclinations.

This first step is "to learn to listen," to wish to listen, to wish to drop the chaos in oneself in the same way that we drop the body at physical death. This step means that we will not interfere any longer, will not change anything (in the beginning not even ourselves); that we will not quarrel; that we have no opinion to insist upon; that we will not translate what we hear into our automatic daily language—which would be equal to letting it go out the other ear. This step means that one stays quietly apart from the multitudinous army of attacking thoughts and feelings and physical associations.

To be able to listen is a most difficult task, even if most Westerners do not wish to believe this. The Chinese sage,

Lu-bu-ve, wrote, "All people need a certain training of the mind before they understand how to listen rightly. He who lacks this training must acquire it by learning. It has never occurred in the past or present that anyone has been able to listen rightly without learning."

The different Yoga systems teach this, each in its own way. This teaching is adapted to the different human types, but at the same time is based on laws as exact as mathematics. To be able to listen is to be able to put aside one's "own" opinion, to be able to empty oneself of the subjective world so that there may be room to take in another. It is well known that no one has been able really to understand, or rather, to practice Yoga without a teacher. This book refers the dying one to his teacher and is the "reminder" of the guru's teaching.

However, it goes beyond this and can be especially useful for modern man in that the text, itself, takes over the role of the teacher for the one who has not had a teacher before. It can do this because it prescribes the means on which all Yoga systems are based—the path which alone leads to the goal. For this reason the *Bardo Thodol* calls itself the "essence of all teachings" and calls them blessed who meet with it. The *Bardo Thodol* is a supremely patient and forbearing teacher, one that again and again, in various ways, tries to bring the one who is wandering in the labyrinth of his own hell, heaven, and earth to self-liberation in this intermediary state after death.

In principle, liberation can take place as soon as identification of the consciousness with illusory happenings and illusory selves is interrupted; or, more positively, when there is created in us that observer who watches our automatic thinking, feeling, and sensing. In practice, liberation is possible at any step, depending on the inner data and peculiarities of each individual. This is

why the admonitions of the text fall on the right soil with different people at different times. When this happens, the person who is being "set face to face with reality" at every step, is finally able to recognize it—that is, himself. Liberation is attained when, through impartial self-observation, self-knowledge is achieved.

The *Bardo Thodol* means literally "liberation through listening in the intermediate state." By intermediate state is meant that long uncertain stretch between death and birth, the chain of self-deception when the being is led astray by "imposters." These "imposters" are the unrecognized contents of consciousness, the deceptions of one's own nature which the various religious systems name egoism, jealousy, hate, avarice, ambition, etc. Buddhism also includes stupidity and insensitivity on this list and Christ speaks of the lame, the halt, and the blind. Those whose ears have not yet opened are "blown hither and thither by the wind of Karma" in the intermediate state. They remain in this state for endless time and do not even recognize death when it happens to them. Those who have ears to hear bring this intermediary state to an end. They draw together in themselves the two imaginary limits of birth and death, so that the line becomes a point, and time, eternity.

It is impossible to foresee what the one who has learned to listen finally attains. What enters into us by "the path of the ear" goes into the secret chamber from which nothing goes out again, and is crystallized there into the master who regulates all our thinking, speaking and acting.

In order to begin—which is very difficult—one should try to approach this text as a pupil comes to his teacher with a question that is important but has nothing to do with the questions of daily life. It is better still to approach it with the dawning awareness of one's own

## Appendix

nothingness which, in spite of everything, we believe ourselves capable of changing. (Goethe says, "You think you push, but in reality you are pushed.") Or to approach it with the desire, free of curiosity, for real knowledge.

It should be added that for right listening, a capacity for patient waiting is essential just as it is for right questioning, when one remembers the story of the Grail. For those who wish to make use of opportunities, there are many in this book. Try, for instance, simply to accept the at first strange unknown Tibetan or Sanskrit names as the unknown quantity in a mathematical equation, without immediately looking up an outer explanation of them in an encyclopedia.

Above all, in reading this book, acceptance is essential—acceptance perhaps of its apparent digressions, or repetitions, or of certain, (perhaps) weak philosophical passages. In these, worn thin over the course of years or translations, one cannot always clearly sense the bloodstream of the text. However, these passages seem intentionally to dull or dampen the reader so that the next impression will strike surer and deeper. One should refrain from making oneself a judge of this book, but rather use it as a helper for oneself.

Then it might be that one could experience what is said in *The Secret of the Golden Flower*: "The hen is able to hatch her eggs because her heart always listens."



**1970 Louise March**

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## Writing *The Gurdjieff Years* with Louise March

By Annabeth McCorkle

For many years Louise March's students and friends urged her to make a written record of her unique experiences with Mr. Gurdjieff. I myself often asked her to let me help get her material into a form suitable for publication, but she always put me off. I persisted, determined that her story not be lost. Several times she started the project with others, but each attempt was eventually abandoned. Then, in July 1987, Mrs. March asked me to write her memoirs.

Throughout the summer and into the fall, Mrs. March and I met weekly in my backyard gazebo to record her reminiscences of her years with Mr. Gurdjieff. Shaded by locust trees, the gazebo looked out onto an expanse of green lawn with islands of bright flowers and a grapevine-covered pergola. Mrs. March liked it there in what she called a "Persian paradise."

Our sessions usually took the form of a taped interview focusing on a specific period or facet of her association with Mr. Gurdjieff. In the interval between each visit I transcribed and edited the "gazebo tapes." The first rough draft was a patchwork of phrases culled from unedited interviews, excerpts from Mrs. March's journals, and sentences from earlier attempts to record her memories. At subsequent meetings, we modified this text by correcting, clarifying, and enlarging it. It was as if I had to "earn" new material by turning the raw data of the previous week into a coherent piece.

Often my own notes and memories from my twenty-four-year association with Mrs. March provided a starting point for further questioning. Some of our most productive exchanges began with my saying, "You once said that...."

## *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949*

After several hours of work, we would eat lunch. Following coffee we might work a little more or, more likely, talk about other things. Each visit concluded with a walk around the gardens where she collected flowers to press for the extraordinary floral compositions she created in her later years.

As the manuscript began to take shape, Mrs. March supplied original documents and photographs dating from the period between 1929 and 1949 for inclusion in the book. One day she read me the portions of her Japan/China journal that she wanted me to incorporate into the book. Letters, memos, and receipts from hotels, steamship lines, and apartments served to jog her memory as well as to confirm the dates used in the text.

When ambiguities of factual data arose, I called on the research facilities of the public library. When we needed help with Russian words, a professor of Russian was consulted. Establishing the correct chronology of the events Mrs. March described was a wonderful puzzle. Sometimes we were unable to ascertain when or where a certain remembered event occurred. Then Mrs. March would say, "Ah, that will remain a mystery." In such cases, we included the event in the text but without definite reference to time or place. Where specific dates are used, they can be documented.

From the beginning Mrs. March said she did not want this book to be a recapitulation of Mr. Gurdjieff's teaching. She asserted, "Gurdjieff didn't teach. He was. His teaching flowed from that." She wanted to include material that would contribute to a more complete picture of Mr. Gurdjieff. "Much of him has been brought by others. What has been neglected? That is what I should bring," she said. At the same time, Mrs. March realized the difficulty of our task. One day she handed me

a paper on which she had written a quotation from Rene Zuber's book *Who Are You Monsieur Gurdjieff?*: "Is not a personal relationship by its very nature incommunicable?" We continued.

The work didn't always go smoothly. Mrs. March often told me that I was "too blunt." I, on the other hand, was constantly urging her to be "less vague" so the reader could "see" the events she was describing more clearly. She complained that I was "too imaginative" but, in the next breath, acknowledged she needed me to develop the material so we would have something to correct.

Mrs. March and I often struggled, even wrangled, over the use of words, their denotations and connotations. Together we looked for language understandable to the American reader while preserving, as much as possible, Mrs. March's unique formulations. We considered each case separately. Thus, in the fourth chapter, her original, "I broke my head," became, in idiomatic English, "I racked my brain." And, in the second chapter, we let stand her word "other-ness" to describe Mr. Gurdjieffs music.

We searched for concise but accurate definitions for Mr. Gurdjieffs individualistic verbal expressions. I came up with a definition for "make chik" which referred to "a flea or other pesky insect." "Absolutely not," she insisted, "has to be bedbug." "What does 'in galoshes' mean?" I asked. "Arrested," she answered. The images of policemen and handcuffs that this word brought up in me didn't seem to fit. It took a long time for me to "understand" what Mrs. March meant by that use of the word. Only then was I able to write a definition of "in galoshes." And then it took several tries before she was satisfied.

Even though the book's primary focus was the years after she met Mr. Gurdjieff, we realized the desirability of

including some material about her childhood. To avoid presenting her incorrectly as "having had it easy," we wanted at least to mention the difficulty of her relationship with her mother. As Mrs. March spoke of this matter, I recognized her narrative was without a hint of complaint.

By the end of the summer I realized we were part of a many-layered process. While Mrs. March was presenting me with material for publication, she was also providing conditions which, to some degree, paralleled her experience as she worked with Mr. Gurdjieff on the translation of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. She was giving me that work—directly, practically.

In the fall, not long after her eighty-seventh birthday, Mrs. March entered the hospital for minor surgery. Unexpected complications occurred. On November 14, 1987, at about two o'clock in the morning, as a handful of us stood by her bed, she died. Never having seen another person die, I can't say whether Mrs. March's death was typical. I suspect it was not. I was unprepared for the experience of seeing her release. I was left with a confidence that the light that she was, was returning to its source.

At the time of Mrs. March's death we had not finished our project. We had, however, agreed on the essential content and basic structure of her biography, including the use of the first person voice. The final draft of the book was written after her death. Although the editorial changes to prepare the text for publication were extensive, they conformed to Mrs. March's intention.

In 1987, as Mrs. March and I were editing her memories of Mr. Gurdjieff, we knew *The Gurdjieff Years 1929-1949* was only the first installment other history. A companion volume, about her establishment of the Gurdjieff work in Rochester, New York, was also needed.

## Appendix

With this end in mind, Mrs. March encouraged me to solicit written memories from her former and current students. After the 1990 publication of *The Gurdjieff Years*, when many people wrote to me wanting to know more about Mrs. March's transmission of Gurdjieff's teaching in the time between his death and her own - a period of almost forty years - I knew the time had come to make this material available. To the written recollections of her students, I added letters written by her, themes given by her, newspaper articles about her, and notes from my own journals. In 2007, the fiftieth anniversary of her first visit to Rochester, I printed and distributed privately *The Rochester Years 1957-1987: The Work of Louise March*.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Book of Life*. See also, Rainer Maria Rilke, *The Book of Hours Comprising the Three Books: Of the Monastic Life, Of Pilgrimage, Of Poverty and Death* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1961). A. L. Peck's translation reads: "You are the dark one, the unknown/ from age to age, world without end."

<sup>2</sup> Smith College Archives.

<sup>3</sup> Additional material concerning the relationship between Louise Goepfert March and Georgia O'Keeffe can be found in Roxana Robinson, *Georgia O'Keeffe-A Life* (New York: Harper&Row, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) A 8 III (Goepfert, Louise) March 23, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>5</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) A 8 III (Dohrn, Harald), February 22, 1922 Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>6</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.12 April 11, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>7</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) A 8 III (Goepfert, Louise) June 15, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>^</sup> The "proverbs" as they were known in 1929, are now called the "aphorisms" and can be found in *Views From The Real World* (New York: E. R Dutton & Company Inc., 1973).

<sup>9</sup> I suggest that Reitlinger is the A. Y Rachmilievitch in James Moore's biography of Gurdjieff.

<sup>10</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.1 July 5, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>n</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.2 September 8, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>12</sup> The author's collection of letters, notes, journals, receipts, translations, and essays given to her by Louise March for inclusion in this book. (Hereafter abbreviated as LGM-AWM)

<sup>13</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.1 July 5, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> See Thomas de Hartmann (and Olga de Hartmann), *Our Life With Mr. Gurdjieff* (Cam Francisco: Harper and Row Publishers, 1983).

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<sup>16</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.1 July 5, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>17</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.2 September 8, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 32:26.

<sup>19</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.2 September 8, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.1 July 5, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>22</sup> For further philological references, see *Guide & Index to G. I. Gurdjieff's Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson* (Toronto: Traditional Studies Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Dr. Laura Janda, professor of Russian.

<sup>24</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.1 July 5, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany

<sup>25</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.5 September 16, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>26</sup> LGM-AWM

<sup>27</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.5 September 16, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>28</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.6 October 24, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.7 October 26, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> During the 1960s, the famed Europa-Center was erected on the site of the legendary Romanische Cafe.

<sup>33</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.8 November 16, 1929. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main, Germany.

<sup>34</sup> Receipt from Trebuhs Realty for \$200 from G.J. Gurdjieff (*sic*), dated March 20, 1930, for rent for Apt G for "one month commencing March 20, 1930."

## Endnotes

<sup>35</sup> Letter from Louise Goepfert to Dr. Walter Beran Wolfe, dated March 2, 1930, translated from the original German into English by Louise March on September 4, 1984.

<sup>36</sup> Letter from Louise March to Margaritha Schwarzenbach, dated March 3, 1930. Those parts not quoted from Mr. Gurdjieff translated by Louise March on September 4, 1984.

<sup>37</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) A 8 III (Goepfert, Louise) April 28, 1930. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main.

<sup>38</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) A 8 III (Goepfert, Louise) Letter of Paquet from May 2, 1930. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main.

<sup>39</sup> Letter of A. Paquet to Georges Gurdjieff from March 28, 1934. (Nachl. A. Paquet, untreated part of estate). Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main.

<sup>40</sup> March 30, 1934 Telegram from Gurdjieff in Berlin to Paquet in Frankfurt.

<sup>41</sup> LGM-AWM

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Receipt from Trebuhs Realty for \$400 to G. J. Gundgieff (*sic*), dated January 12, 1931, for rent for Apt H, Q, and L from January '11 to February 10, 1931.

<sup>44</sup> LGM-AWM

<sup>45</sup> Circulating within the Gurdjieff community are several photographs of a bearded Gurdjieff signed "Tony von Horn" and dated 1924. It is more likely these were taken in winter of 1930-1931 when Louise Goepfert introduced Toni and Gurdjieff in New York City

<sup>46</sup> LGM-AWM

<sup>47</sup> In Shandong Province, 5000-foot-high Mount Tai (Tai Shan) has been a place of worship for over 3,000 years. One of the several gods venerated there is Yanguang Nainai, the goddess of eyesight. Tai Shan is considered one of China's Five Sacred Mountains. Now cable cars carry visitors to the top of the mountain.

<sup>48</sup> Nachl.A.Paquet (II) F 1: G 32.9 October 20, 1931. Universitätsbibliothek Johann Christian Senckenberg Frankfurt am Main.

<sup>49</sup> Receipt for six first class steamship tickets on the S. S. Bremen and made out to Miss Louise Goepfert.

<sup>50</sup> LGM-AWM

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

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52 Letter from Elizabeth Gordon to Louise March, dated February 14, 1937.

53 LGM-AWM

54 George Baker proposed the following clarification to this exercise: Make a contact with this space, this Christ. Find connection in breath, in voice. Say "I" aloud, let resonance and overtones settle in you. Then say "Am," and the same thing. Then say "Wish to become Christ," wait, then say "Become," wait, then say, "Be." Every day find time to make this effort.

55 LGM-AWM

56 Manfred Keyserling, *Naturbilder und Urbilder* (Innsbruck: Verlag der Palme, 1949).

57 After Joseph's death in 1972, his widow Carla and Louise March continued their friendship. In August 1978 at East Hill Farm, they had a joint birthday celebration: her 80th, Louise March's 78th.

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# The Gurdjieff Years: 1929–1949

Recollections of Louise Goepfert March

By Annabeth McCorkle

Louise Goepfert March was G. I. Gurdjieff's student, secretary, and the translator of the German edition of his magnum opus, *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*. Her association with him lasted from 1929 until his death in 1949. She devoted the rest of her life to the transmission of his teaching.

In the months preceding her death in 1987, Louise March worked with Annabeth McCorkle to produce this first-hand account of her years with George Ivanovich Gurdjieff. Here in stunning glimpses, Gurdjieff's ideas are discovered at work in the formation of a life dedicated to the search for Truth.

The narrative renders boldly and in rich detail Louise Goepfert's first meeting with Gurdjieff in New York City. The account of her subsequent years at the Prieuré in France—during which she received Gurdjieff's "all-embracing education"—is liberally salted with anecdotes describing this great teacher's unorthodox methods. Unique in the Gurdjieff literature is a chapter devoted to the translation of *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*.

This expanded edition includes new material reflective of her life and work. Of note are the inclusion of excerpts of her letters to Alfons Paquet written between 1929 and 1931 and her essay, "An Introduction to The Tibetan Book of the Dead, containing some suggestions as to the right method of reading Gurdjieff's *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson*."

EUREKA EDITIONS 2012