

CONTROVERSIAL REPUTATION¹

During the 1920s Gurdjieff gained prominence in the West as a powerful teacher of esoteric ideas. Important writers, journalists and academics began paying attention to Gurdjieff and his students. As with many charismatic figures surrounded by an entourage of dedicated followers, rumour and innuendo swirled like dark clouds around Gurdjieff and his community at the Château du Prieuré in France:

A certain ambivalence broods over the historical Prieuré, almost as if both White and Black Magician held sway there; perhaps – in unequal measure – they did. Bechhofer-Roberts detected signs of hoofs and horns all over the place; Clifford Sharpe, despite his fundamental sympathy, had Gurdjieff manipulating ‘with an ingenuity that is almost diabolical’; and Captain John Godolphin Bennett (a weekend guest) alleges: ‘Some people went mad. There were even suicides. Many gave up in despair.’ (1)

Even though many of the allegations were subsequently proven to be untrue or at least greatly exaggerated, an impression was created in the minds of many that Gurdjieff was disreputable or even dangerous. He was described by cynical journalists and members of the French metaphysical establishment as an authoritarian dictator who controlled and manipulated his followers: “Gurdjieff demanded and received absolute obedience from every one of his pupils. His word was law, and he reigned as a tyrant among devoted slaves.” (2)

In subsequent years the press, outside observers and some of Gurdjieff’s own students continued to question and criticize his motives, scope of knowledge, unorthodox healing practices, personal behaviour and habits, patriarchal beliefs, gender attitudes and even his driving. And after his death in 1949 a number of critical articles and books appeared which vilified the man and his teachings, reinforcing the impression that Gurdjieff was at best misguided and at worst a charlatan and demagogue.

Criticism by Journalists and the French Metaphysical Community

The establishment of Gurdjieff’s Institute for the Harmonious Development of Man at the Château du Prieuré in 1922 attracted the attention of many journalists eager for a sensational story. Gurdjieff and his followers did not disappoint. A number of rumours quickly surfaced and circulated with little or no evidence to substantiate them. The popular press vied for the most outrageous article: Gurdjieff exercised occult powers; he seduced his female disciples; he was responsible for several deaths under suspicious circumstances. Gurdjieff was widely referred to as a ‘Black Magician,’ and one French critic labelled him “a false prophet, a pretentious ignoramus.”

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Gurdjieff's controversial image followed him to North America. In 1933 well-known English writer Rom Landau visited Gurdjieff in a New York City hotel for an interview. According to Gurdjieff biographer James Webb, Landau was alarmed and agitated by the experience:

The interview with Gurdjieff went badly. Landau was discomposed by having unwanted cigarettes pressed on him, and Gurdjieff clearly did not intend to answer his questions. Even worse, the journalist appeared to be falling under some "hypnotic influence" or "electric emanation" which deprived him of the power to move from his chair and gave him a feeling of "acute nervousness" in the pit of his stomach. Gurdjieff looked "the perfect Levantine, evasive in his answers, hyperbolic and anxious as to what effect he was producing." (3)

Many of the rumours surrounding Gurdjieff during and after his life were wildly speculative without a shred of supporting evidence. James Webb claimed that Gurdjieff was once an agent for the Russian secret service, but supplied no convincing substantiation in his 1980 biography of Gurdjieff. A rumour, circulating in London émigré circles during the 1930s, suggesting Gurdjieff had been imprisoned for evading military service in his youth was, again, sheer speculation. Allegations by French writer Louis Pauwels in 1954 that Gurdjieff played an important role in shaping Nazi ideology, including having suggested the use of the reversed swastika, were subsequently refuted by credible historical sources.

Some of the most serious allegations about Gurdjieff involved sexual misconduct and suspicious circumstances surrounding the deaths of some of his students. Biographer James Moore thoroughly reviewed these accusations and found virtually no supporting evidence. (4) Although the most outrageous allegations have been dispelled by Moore and others, the impression they created at the time left a cloud of suspicion that hung over Gurdjieff for the rest of his life.

Gurdjieff was also opposed by the French metaphysical establishment. When he began teaching in France in 1922 there was already a long tradition of esoteric studies in that country. Proponents of these metaphysical schools quickly denounced Gurdjieff and his ideas as an affront to traditional spiritual teachings. He was labeled a charlatan and accused of leading his followers into a spiritual void.

The chief critic of Gurdjieff and his teachings for much of the 1930s and 1940s was the leading French esotericist René Guénon, who advised his students to "flee Gurdjieff like the plague." He strongly condemned Gurdjieff's personal behaviour and perceived disregard for traditional spiritual transmission through established religions such as Christianity and Islam. (5)

Criticisms by Pupils of Gurdjieff

Students have expressed reservations about Gurdjieff from the earliest days of his teaching mission. His most famous pupil, P.D. Ouspensky, began to lose confidence in Gurdjieff as early as 1917. Finally, at a meeting in January 1924 with his English pupils, Ouspensky formally broke off all relations with Gurdjieff. He discussed his misgivings:

Mr. Gurdjieff is a very extraordinary man. His possibilities are much greater than those of people like ourselves. But he can also go in the wrong way. I believe that he is now passing through a crisis, the outcome of which no one can foresee. Most people have many "I"s. If these "I"s are at war with one another it does not produce great harm, because they are all weak. But with Mr. Gurdjieff there are only two "I"s; one very good and one very bad. I believe that in the end the good "I" will conquer. But meanwhile it is very dangerous to be near him. (6)

Criticism of Gurdjieff's domineering personality and confrontational teaching style also emerged in the 1920s at the Prieuré in France. Nikolai de Stjernvall, a biological son of Gurdjieff, spent his childhood at the Prieuré and describes the power of his personality and the fear among some of his students at that time:

Gurdjieff surrounded himself with competent, intelligent and cultivated people. Nevertheless, it must be admitted that practically no one dared to defy, contradict, criticize or lead him into an argument, or even react to the humiliations which he forced occasionally his disciples to bear. The only one who could hold his head high by saying to his face, in Armenian, what he thought of him was his own brother Mido . . . At the end of violent confrontations between the two, the master could be seen leaving ashamed for having been opposed. Gurdjieff obviously had a personality out of the ordinary. The mastery which he exercised over his adepts was almost limitless. More or less everyone was subjugated to his will. Some admired G.I., some venerated him, while others openly hated him. His occult powers, the aura of mystery which surrounded him, his magnetic personality, his extraordinary intuition, were such that women of all rank and social standing could not resist him and succumbed to his charm, so much so that his detractors did not hesitate to qualify him as demonic. (7)

By the early 1930s Gurdjieff's reputation among many of his students was in tatters. They were disillusioned by his seedy appearance, unprincipled behaviour, and his alleged use of hypnosis and unorthodox medical treatments as a source of income. By the summer of 1933 scandalous rumours about Gurdjieff had reached a crescendo: he was slovenly and debauched; he was afraid of the dark and of being alone; he was out of control and destroying everything; he was alienating even his closest students.

Even Jean Toomer, a loyal American follower of Gurdjieff for many years, began to experience doubts about his teacher:

Was he the supreme egotist? Was he, as some claimed, insane? Did he, as some also claimed, know psychic laws but was essentially stupid in his practical dealings with people? If he knew anything at all about me, how could he fail to know that I was ready and willing to do all I possibly could as regards any real need of his that I could grasp and understand, whereas just these tricky manipulative tactics were sure to throw me off. (8)

Some of Gurdjieff's pupils considered the litany of criticisms directed at him to be one-sided and unjust. Others believed that Gurdjieff was being scapegoated for anything negative that he happened to be proximate to:

He is accused, blamed, for having been present, for having been absent, for helping and for refraining from helping, for talking and for being silent, when a variety of events ranging in people's imagination from rape to taking the veil, from natural death to suicide, from bankruptcy to brilliant success took place in the lives of this one or that one of his followers. (9)

During the Second World War, Gurdjieff resided in occupied Paris, and although he kept a lower profile there his reputation was far from spotless. Despite widespread rationing, Gurdjieff maintained a very comfortable lifestyle: "His lavish hospitality struck a jarring note at a time of material privation: for even if the Master expended a great deal of time and money on his pupils, just how, in that occupied city, had he acquired the vodka and the delicacies which gave his feasts their memorable flavor?" (10) According to James Webb, authorities assembled a wartime dossier on Gurdjieff which was bulging with reports of unlawful activities. Webb claimed that Gurdjieff worked the black market and even collaborated with the Germans.

Following the war, students of Gurdjieff from all over the world returned to their teacher. However, many were shocked by his bad language and outrageous behaviour. When John Bennett brought a large group of English students to meet Gurdjieff, he saw fit to prepare them for any manner of conduct by Gurdjieff:

I must warn you that Gurdjieff is far more of an enigma than you can imagine. I am certain that he is deeply good, and that he is working for the good of mankind. But his methods are often incomprehensible. For example, he uses disgusting language, especially to ladies who are likely to be squeamish about such things. He has the reputation of behaving shamelessly over money matters, and with women also. At his table we have to drink spirits, often to the point of drunkenness. People have said that he is a magician, and that he uses his powers for his own ends . . . I do not believe that the scandalous tales told of

Gurdjieff are true: but you must take into account that they may be true and act accordingly. (11)

The final few years of Gurdjieff's life were arguably the most fertile of his long teaching career. Students remember this time as one of bountiful giving as Gurdjieff drew from his vast spiritual resources to pass on his profound knowledge. Yet the critics continued to have their say. A 1946 article in the French periodical *l'Illustration* accused Gurdjieff of spell-binding powers which sent his pupils into a "cataleptic state."

Gurdjieff's negative reputation even followed him to his grave. In the years following his death a number of critical articles were published in the French press which contributed to a distorted impression of Gurdjieff and his ideas. In the last few decades, however, a new generation of scholars have looked more objectively at information promulgated by critics and the press about Gurdjieff, and have challenged the veracity of many of their allegations.

Exaggerated Knowledge and Abilities

Although Gurdjieff undoubtedly possessed an understanding of the human condition far surpassing that of most people, his knowledge and capacities were perhaps more modest than he claimed. Critics have accused Gurdjieff of arrogance, exaggeration and even megalomania. Psychiatrist Anthony Storr questioned his claim in *Meetings with Remarkable Men* that he knew eighteen languages, noting that there is no evidence to support this. Author Louis Pauwels challenged Gurdjieff's assertion in a 1923 pamphlet distributed in Paris that he had almost 5,000 adherents throughout the world and was conducting research in a number of scientific fields. According to Pauwels, "many of his statements were patently absurd . . . wholly misleading and untrue." (12)

Storr reproached Gurdjieff on a number of his pronouncements which contradicted accepted scientific knowledge:

Gurdjieff's arrogance and disregard of established experts were extraordinary. When he visited the caves of Lascaux, he told J.G. Bennett that he did not agree with the Abbé Breuil's dating of the rock paintings at thirty thousand years ago because he had concluded that the paintings were the work of a brotherhood that existed after the loss of Atlantis some seven or eight thousand years ago . . . He said that he had invented a special means of increasing the visibility of the planets and the sun and also for releasing energies that would influence the whole world situation. Gurdjieff's complete disregard for science and for the views of generally accepted experts is narcissistic in the extreme. (13)

Gurdjieff was not a certified doctor and did not possess any legitimate medical credentials. However, his followers were convinced that he had acquired a vast knowledge of the workings of the human body and mind. He frequently recommended

unorthodox treatments to his pupils, including lengthy fasts, dietary regimes, olive oil enemas and breathing exercises. He used hypnosis and other unconventional methods to treat alcoholism, drug addiction, depression and sexual dysfunction.

During the 1920s and 1930s, when Gurdjieff began to rely on giving medical treatments and advice as a supplementary source of income, he found himself frequently in conflict with the medical establishment, who widely regarded him as a quack. In one instance, when one of his students vomited blood, Gurdjieff disputed the diagnosis of an intestinal ulcer by English physician James Young, but was subsequently proved wrong. In another case he interfered with the treatment of an alcoholic woman, which infuriated the attending physician. Some of Gurdjieff's methods, like hypnosis, are no longer considered out of the ordinary by contemporary medical practitioners. However, Gurdjieff's practices of diagnosing illness and prescribing treatment without any medical training were widely regarded by the medical authorities as irresponsible and dangerous.

Despite his lack of official credentials, Gurdjieff was considered to be a genuine healer by many of his pupils and associates. Accounts by students like Fritz Peters and others indicate that Gurdjieff was able to transmit subtle healing energy and to influence the psychological and physiological functioning of those he treated. On balance, the available evidence suggests that, while Gurdjieff possessed genuine healing abilities, he clearly overstepped ethical and professional boundaries in believing that he could provide appropriate medical treatment and advice to all who came to him for help.

Gender Attitudes

Gurdjieff's attitudes about women and gender roles were complex and often contradictory. Commentators have noted how infrequently women are mentioned in his major writings. (14) It is difficult to pinpoint what he truly believed about women as opposed to what was merely self-serving or designed to shock or challenge prevailing attitudes and beliefs.

When he did express views about women, they appeared to many to be at best simplistic and naïve, and at worst misogynistic. The role of women, he claimed, was to nourish men and bear children, and under no circumstances was domestic life to be considered more important than the work of self-transformation. A.R. Orage reported that Gurdjieff told him that "some women, whose proper roles are collaboratively spiritual and moral, need not bear and raise children in the interests of men, but others should do so to provide Earth with more seekers for truth." (15) According to John Bennett, Gurdjieff regarded women as only a means to an end, sexual satisfaction. And Orage reported that on more than one occasion Gurdjieff remarked that "the cause of every anomaly can be found in woman." (16)

Gurdjieff advocated separating women from men during their menstrual periods due to his questionable belief that women's personalities during their menses became intolerable

and even “psycho-organically harmful” to others. In *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* he quotes with approval the “unchangeable truths” supposedly enunciated by King Solomon:

Women during their menstruation are, in the consecrated sense, unclean; and that during these periods, for others, and especially for their husbands, not only to touch them, but to speak with them, is the highest sacrilege and a crime. An unclean force or evil spirit will enter into those husbands or into men in general who touch or even speak with them during this period; in consequence of which there would be among men in their everyday relations and affairs only misunderstandings, quarrels, and enmity. (17)

Gurdjieff believed that the spiritual development of men and women proceed along fundamentally different lines. He taught that, in general, intellect is dominant in men and emotion in women; that women have a passive role in life compared to the active role natural to men. Gurdjieff sometimes asserted that the challenge for women is greater than for men because “women were more likely to allow their essential beings to be influenced by exterior considerations, so that women faced a more difficult task than men in ascending the scale of development from sensuous to emotional to intellectual to objective consciousness.” (18) Yet, when asked whether women can develop as well as men on the path of self-transformation, he responded that both genders had equal chances:

He said very specifically that men and women have equal possibilities of inner development. He insisted on the difference in their types of natural energy, and the roles to be played in outer life in order to be in tune with them. But the work on oneself is the same for all, there is no difference. (19)

Gurdjieff made other seemingly contradictory statements regarding the possibilities of spiritual growth for men and women. He told A.R. Orage that for men the work of self-development was blocked by the distracting presence of women and their sexual allure. But, he also claimed that a woman could consciously collaborate with a man to promote the growth of both into spiritual wholeness: “It is absolutely necessary for every person, in the process of his responsible life, to have beside him a person of the opposite sex of corresponding type for mutual completion in every respect.” (20)

In group teaching situations at the Château du Prieuré during the 1920s, the respective roles of male and female students differed:

In the Study House men sat on the right and women sat on the left. On Saturdays, the men went alone with Gurdjieff to the Russian bath and there they heard many things that we were supposed not to repeat in the ears of women. After the Russian bath the men went privately to dine with Gurdjieff and the toasts, first of all, were given for men only . . . It was not until after his accident, when life at the Prieuré became more of a family affair than a work situation, that the segregation of men and women was modified. (21)

At his Institute at the Prieuré, Gurdjieff imposed strict rules for the women. They were only allowed to smoke in their rooms and not on the grounds or in the Study House. Jesse Orage, wife of A.R. Orage, shocked many of Gurdjieff's pupils in the 1920s by dressing in trousers and smoking openly when she visited the Prieuré. She appears to be an exception among Gurdjieff's female students at the time, as most of them diligently followed his rules for women.

In his personal life Gurdjieff had numerous sexual liaisons with women, many of them his students, and fathered at least eight children. But these relationships seemed strangely detached, with little apparent emotional connection: "If Gurdjieff's casual couplings ever turned his head, seriously engaged his heart, or deflected his course of action by a hair's breadth – the evidence is peculiarly lacking." (22)

Gurdjieff's relationships with the mothers of his children and his own offspring appear to be ambivalent. Some of the women (Elizabetha Stjernvall, Eva Taylor and Jessmin Howarth) were clearly confused, angry and resentful at Gurdjieff's distance and lack of emotional support following the birth of their child. A number of his children, such as Nikolai de Stjernvall and Dushka Howarth, also expressed strong antipathy toward him as their father. Their relationship was sometimes affectionate, but also at times strained, as they resented his criticisms, demands for strict obedience to his wishes and attempts to control their lives. (23)

Supporters of Gurdjieff have noted that, despite the gender inequalities evident at the Prieuré during the 1920s and Gurdjieff's traditional conservative beliefs regarding women (24), many of his female students played significant roles in his teaching mission. Many of his most prominent and successful pupils were women, including respected authors Margaret Anderson and Kathryn Hulme. Olga de Hartmann was Gurdjieff's personal secretary for many years and was integrally involved in the practical running of the Prieuré. He entrusted Jane Heap, Henriette Lannes and Jeanne de Salzman to transmit his teachings to future generations. Jeanne de Salzman, in particular, played a decisive role, having taught Movements classes for many years under Gurdjieff's direction, led study groups in Paris during the 1930s and 1940s and later assumed leadership in the continuation of Gurdjieff's teaching after his death.

Many observers have commented on the enigma of the women-only group known as 'The Rope' created by Gurdjieff in the 1930s. The members were all strong, successful women, largely lesbian, who did not subscribe to traditional gender roles for females. Yet, Gurdjieff placed great importance on the group and used its members to experiment with many innovative teaching methods, both individually and collectively. The existence of 'The Rope' contradicts many of Gurdjieff's written and stated beliefs regarding the possibilities of women's spiritual development. It highlights the fact that Gurdjieff's teaching relationship with women was complex and not easily understood by outside observers.

Travelling Adventures

The advent of the automobile age ushered in unexpected adventures for pupils of Gurdjieff and a new creative method of teaching. Gurdjieff learned to drive in 1923, and for the next 26 years he used automobiles for a succession of personal trips and excursions with pupils throughout the European countryside.

By all accounts Gurdjieff was a terrible driver. (25) “In reality he was so dangerous a driver that his followers avoided being driven by him whenever possible.” (26) He taught himself entirely by personal experiment, accompanied by the sounds of grinding gears and squealing brakes. According to Gurdjieff’s niece Luba, his driving style was wildly erratic – he would speed up and slow down unpredictably and change course and direction at a moment’s notice. He also drank alcohol before and during the motor trips, and at times was so drunk he was unable to drive. Pupils describe him as driving like a man possessed. Kathryn Hulme vividly captures the experience:

He drove like a wild man, cutting in and out of traffic without hand signals or even space to accommodate his car in the lanes he suddenly switched to . . . until he was in them, safe by a hair . . . he always got away first on the green light even (so it seemed) when he was one or two cars behind the starting line . . . the chances he took overtaking buses and trucks were terrifying. I watched with suspended breath each time he swung out around a truck and headed directly into another coming toward him on the narrow two lane road. (27)

Gurdjieff was involved in at least four automobile accidents, many of them not his fault, but one of them so serious that it almost cost him his life. In July 1924 while returning home to the Château du Prieuré from Paris late at night he crashed his car at high speed. (28) He was found unconscious in his car the next morning and did not fully recover from his injuries for many months. Nevertheless, soon after the accident he attempted to get behind the wheel again. His secretary Olga de Hartmann thwarted his plan by surreptitiously cutting the car’s accelerator cable.

During the last two decades of his life Gurdjieff took frequent trips by car, throughout France and neighbouring countries. These trips served a dual purpose. First, Gurdjieff used these excursions and the new impressions they brought to stimulate his writing and re-energize his body. He would work on the manuscripts of *Beelzebub’s Tales to His Grandson* and *Meetings with Remarkable Men* in cafés, wayside inns or in his car. The second purpose of his trips was to create deliberate difficulties and challenges for his pupils as food for self-observation and self-study. (29) Students have recounted the typical confusion and uproar surrounding Gurdjieff’s travel departures:

His departures were always disconcerting. Very often he would fix a time for going and would be ready half an hour earlier when those invited to go with him had to drop their preparations and rush to join him in the car. At other times, he would suddenly decide to work on

Beelzebub and would sit at the wheel of the car for half an hour or an hour while everyone waited to know whether he would leave . . . Some people avoided going in his car [because of his notorious driving] and preferred to follow behind, which he only rarely permitted. (30)

James Webb describes some of the frequent and unnecessary problems on Gurdjieff's journeys deliberately created by his "carelessness" or instigation:

Gurdjieff would appoint a map reader – and decline to consult him. He would refuse to stop for gas until he ran out – whereupon one of the passengers would have to trudge back to the nearest village. He never carried a spare tire, and so, if a puncture occurred, the tire had to be repaired, not replaced. (31)

Gurdjieff's intractable behavior on trips was not limited to automobile travel. Fritz Peters accompanied his teacher on a journey by train from New York to Chicago in the 1930s and was driven to the point of exasperation. His outrageous behaviour and wanton disregard for the sensibilities of his fellow passengers was classic Gurdjieff, as he was "smoking incessantly despite passengers' complaints and threats from the porter, drinking heavily, and intermittently producing foods – mainly evil-smelling cheeses – all the time apologizing profusely to the irate passengers even while inventing new ways to annoy and offend." (32)

While tales of Gurdjieff's wild and unpredictable behavior during trips may seem amusing, his dangerous driving, especially under the influence of alcohol, was clearly irresponsible.

Commentary

Gurdjieff, like many other historical and contemporary spiritual teachers, was shadowed by controversy throughout his life. It is important to separate fact from fiction, reality from imagination and objective reporting from subjective interpretation and personal motivation in evaluating the validity of the various accusations leveled against him.

In hindsight, much of the controversy and criticism surrounding Gurdjieff during his lifetime was based on bias, selective reporting, misunderstanding and superficial assessment. The same holds true for many of the critical arrows directed at Gurdjieff by outside critics and commentators in the decades following his death.

However, first-hand accounts expressing doubts and criticisms of Gurdjieff's behaviour, beliefs and teaching methods by many of his pupils carry more weight and should not be dismissed out of hand. P.D. Ouspensky, Fritz Peters, Jean Toomer, John Bennett and others have voiced varying degrees of skepticism about Gurdjieff's infallibility

as a teacher, a healthy counterbalance to the adulation, personality worship and unquestioning obedience of some of his followers.

The limits of Gurdjieff's knowledge, beliefs and abilities is also open to question. There is little doubt that in many instances Gurdjieff deliberately exaggerated or stretched the truth for teaching purposes, role playing or as part of the 'Path of Blame.' But in other cases he appeared to hold beliefs that were incorrect, suggesting that he was certainly not infallible. Perhaps the best example was his trip with John Bennett and other students to the Lascaux caves in France in 1949. When Bennett mentioned that the caves had been carbon dated to be at least 30,000 years old, Gurdjieff vehemently disagreed, citing a much later date which coincided with his beliefs about ancient history. Gurdjieff was so set in his beliefs that he was unable to adjust or modify them even when new, more accurate information was presented to him. Subsequent archeological research has confirmed the dates suggested by Bennett. The certainty with which Gurdjieff made medical diagnoses and provided his own interventions and treatments without any medical supervision is also open to valid criticism.

Gurdjieff also held very strong, conservative, traditional beliefs regarding the role of women, patriarchal authority and other manifestations of a male-dominated cultural order. From the perspective of the 21st century many of these attitudes appear rigid and uncompromising. Were these attitudes and beliefs reflections of 'objective knowledge' or coloured by historical and cultural influences and conditioning? It is telling that many of his senior Russian students cautioned newcomers to the Prieuré to make a distinction between the spiritual teachings that Gurdjieff imparted and his own personal beliefs.

NOTES

- (1) James Moore *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element Books, 1991), p. 176.
- (2) Louis Pauwels *Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), p. 154.
- (3) James Webb *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Works of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), p. 421.
- (4) Moore refutes the allegations in James Moore *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element Books, 1991, p. 343):

The aspersion that Gurdjieff abused Katherine Mansfield sexually need not be dignified by comment; the accusation that his Prieuré regime hastened her death gives insufficient weight to her extended pathological history . . . The allegation that Gurdjieff caused the death of his eminent French pupil René Daumal is at variance not only with the viewpoint of Daumal's widow Vera but with the explicit letter of his brother Jack Daumal . . . And finally the charge that

Gurdjieff precipitated the ‘suicide’ of the young Irene-Carole Reweliotty conflicts both with her death certificate and her mother: both attribute her death to heart disease following a long history of pulmonary tuberculosis.

- (5) Guénon’s denunciation of Gurdjieff is sometimes attributed to a meeting between Guénon and Alexander de Salzmann, a senior student of Gurdjieff. According to author James Webb, de Salzmann, who possessed a sharp wit, insulted Guénon by making fun of the latter’s feigned humility.
- (6) John G. Bennett *Witness: The Autobiography of John G. Bennett* (Tucson: Omen Press, 1974), p. 126.
- (7) Nikolai de Stjernvall *My Dear Father Gurdjieff* (Dublin: Bardic Press, 2013), pp.16-17.
- (8) James Webb *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Works of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), pp. 422-423.
- (9) James Moore *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element Books, 1991), p. 343.
- (10) James Webb *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Works of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), p. 469.
- (11) John G. Bennett *Witness: The Autobiography of John G. Bennett* (Tucson: Omen Press, 1974), p. 244.
- (12) Louis Pauwels *Gurdjieff* (New York: Samuel Weiser, 1972), p. 165.
- (13) Anthony Storr *Feet of Clay* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 36.
- (14) Philosophy professor Henry Leroy Finch elaborates in “The Sacred Cosmos: Teachings of G.I. Gurdjieff” in Jacob Needleman and George Baker, eds. *Gurdjieff: Essays and Reflections on the Man and His Teaching* (New York: Continuum, 1996, p. 24):

What bears further discussion is Gurdjieff’s attitude in general toward women. The whole cosmic fable, in both its heavenly and earthly dimensions, is virtually exclusively populated by men. Not even wives are mentioned. In fact, there is only one woman to be found anywhere in the Gurdjieff corpus, a woman named Vitvitskaia, and she, we are told, ‘dressed like a man.’ While Gurdjieff autobiographically has a lot to say about his father, he has almost nothing to say in writing about his mother . . . There are nowhere descriptions of affairs or relations with

women. Romance and sex do not exist in this atmosphere of religious importance.

- (15) Paul Beekman Taylor *Shadows of Heaven: Gurdjieff and Toomer* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser Books, 1998), p. 144.
- (16) Paul Beekman Taylor *Gurdjieff and Orage: Brothers in Elysium* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser Books, 2001), p. 243.
- (17) G.I Gurdjieff *Beelzebub's Tales to His Grandson: An Objectively Impartial Criticism of the Life of Man* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950), pp. 1112-1113.
- (18) Paul Beekman Taylor *Gurdjieff and Orage: Brothers in Elysium* (York Beach, Maine: Weiser Books, 2001), p. 243.
- (19) Pauline de Dampierre "The Search for Being" in Jacob Needleman, ed. *The Inner Journey: Views from the Gurdjieff Work* (Sandpoint, Idaho: Morning Light Press, 2008), p. 88.
- (20) G.I. Gurdjieff *Meetings with Remarkable Men* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 56.
- (21) John G. Bennett *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 231.
- (22) James Moore *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element Books, 1991), p. 2.
- (23) Details of Gurdjieff's complex relationship with some of his children can be found in Nikolai de Stjernvall's *My Dear Father Gurdjieff* (Dublin: Bardic Press, 2013) and Jessmin and Dushka Howarth's *It's Up To Ourselves: A Mother, A Daughter, and Gurdjieff* (New York: Gurdjieff Heritage Society, 2008).
- (24) Gurdjieff's conservative view of women and how they should or should not behave in public is vividly captured in an exchange between Gurdjieff and pupil Margaret Anderson ('Kanari') in a Paris café in 1936. (William Patrick Patterson *Georgi Ivanovitch Gurdjieff: The Man, The Teaching, His Mission* Fairfax, California: Arete Communication, 2014, pp. 317-318):

Toward the end of dinner, Kanari casually brings out her compact and powders her nose. Gurdjieff erupts, making himself look terrifying, veins standing out on his forehead as he shouts: "I am Oriental and man. Never can I see woman making prostitute thing without my insides turning over. Never has woman sat in my presence and painted face. I see you make now six times and each time if I had had knife in my

hand I wish send it through your heart. This is seven times and finish. At Prieuré no woman ever dare smoke before me. This idiot fashion put paint on face exist only New York and in territory around Place Opéra. Only prostitute make in other places. If you wish make this thing, you must in water closet go. Now you must remember that you are one of Mr. Gurdjieff's people and pupil. Me, I am Gurdjieff, and compared to me you are shit non-entity."

- (25) Nikolai de Stjernvall often travelled with Gurdjieff and describes his driving style in stark terms:

Despite a first, and then a second serious car accident, G.I. loved to drive his many cars. He drove, alas, terribly. He neither had mechanical sense nor observed the rules of the road. He took little notice of distances between cars. Even when I was very young, each time I was a passenger in one of his cars, I closed my eyes and braked mentally as soon as I saw him start one of his crazy daring manoeuvres on the road in defiance of any caution.

- (26) Anthony Storr *Feet of Clay* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), pp. 41-42.
- (27) Kathryn Hulme *Undiscovered Country: In Search of Gurdjieff* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), p. 66.
- (28) Biographer James Moore discusses the mysterious circumstances this accident at length in *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (Rockport, Massachusetts: Element Books, 1991), pp. 206-207.
- (29) Fritz Peters frequently travelled with Gurdjieff when he was a boy and has provided a memorable description of the multiple purposes of these motor trips in *Boyhood with Gurdjieff* (New York: Penguin, 1972), pp. 128-133.
- (30) John G. Bennett *Gurdjieff: Making a New World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), pp. 167-168.
- (31) James Webb *The Harmonious Circle: The Lives and Works of G.I. Gurdjieff, P.D. Ouspensky, and Their Followers* (Boston: Shambhala, 1987), p. 323.
- (32) Whithall Perry *Gurdjieff: In Light of Tradition* (Bedfont, Middlesex: Perennial Books, 1978), p. 81.