

Gurdjieff and Prince Ozay

Paul Beekman Taylor

Gurdjieff was a man of many masks.
Professor Taylor examines the conflicting evidence surrounding
whether or not Ozay was one of Gurdjieff's personas.

GURDJIEFF was a man of many parts and many roles. How many different nominal identities he adopted during his life has been particularly difficult for his biographers to tally. On the one hand, Rom Landau's identification of Gurdjieff with Agwan Dordjieff, based on the testimony of Achmed Abdullah,¹ is easily argued away by James Webb;² and Webb's identification of Gurdjieff with Ushé Narzunoff is put in doubt by James Moore.³ On the other hand, Webb considers that the description of "Prince Ozay" by Paul Dukes (1889–1967) replicates the description of Gurdjieff in "Glimpses of Truth,"⁴ and Moore takes the identification of the two as fact.⁵ As Webb has it, "one account which seems to describe Gurdjieff—on a mysterious errand, accompanied by a 'slant-eyed friend'—in St. Petersburg during the winter and early spring of 1913–14, is contained in the autobiography of Sir Paul Dukes." (p. 49).

Dukes' story is in Chapter 7 of his text entitled "The Lord's Prayer," where Dukes recalls that his acquaintance and fellow hypnotist, Lev ("Lion") Lvovitch (Webb's form is *Levovitch*) offered to introduce him to a person in hiding, "of whom there are but few in the world." He led Dukes "to a house at the bottom of a small street not far from the Nicholas station" (p. 99) where, in an exotic setting, they found two men playing chess. One, thickset, with a short bushy beard, dark piercing eyes sparkling with humour, and wearing a turban and silk dressing gown, greeted them in Russian with a "marked accent" (p. 100). "He spoke English better than Russian, rather correctly and with less accent" (p. 101)

¹ *God Is My Adventure* (1935).

² *The Harmonious Circle* (1980), pp. 49–51, where he cites the disclaimer first made in the 1930s by Alexandra David-Neel.

³ *Gurdjieff: The Anatomy of a Myth* (1991), p. 341. In recent correspondence, Moore has told me that Narzunoff and Dordjieff were together at the All-Soviet Congress of Buddhists, 20–28 January, 1927, while Gurdjieff was comfortably ensconced in France.

⁴ Webb, pp. 84–87, Moore, pp. 74–76, Sir Paul Dukes, *The Unending Quest: Autobiographical Sketches* (1950), pp. 99–113.

⁵ "By 1913, Gurdjieff was teaching Paul Dukes under the assumed name 'Prince Ozay'" (p. 341).

After Lev told of Dukes' success in curing peasant ailments by hypnotic suggestion, the turbaned man asked to hear his performance of the Lord's Prayer that figured in his cures. Dukes did so, but his interlocutor said that the breath taken in the middle of the prayer was wrong, then proceeded to chant the prayer himself with "no halt for breath . . . it was one single sound" (p. 101). Dukes felt the penetrating effect of the chanted fading note, and his host explained that a chanted prayer is measure of a single trained breath, and that the Lord's Prayer is designed as a breathing exercise. Christ was a teacher of prayer, and prayer is associated with fasting. Breath is sound and words, he said, but "In the modern religion of the West, which has degenerated into hopeless institutional formalism, the words are mistaken for the whole thing . . . I have been in many churches in England and America,' said my mysterious host, 'and always heard the congregation mumble the Lord's Prayer all together in a scrambled grunt as if the mere muttered repetition of the formula were all required. . . .However alike in appearance, we are all constructed more or less differently from each other. It is closely concerned with how a man breathes, and no two persons breathe exactly alike'" (p. 102). He continued: "Nobody thinks of teaching children how to breathe—nobody, that is, outside certain limited circles. Prayer in its highest form would seem after all to have something to do with the digestion and even with the quality and circulation of the blood"(p. 103). His host gave Dukes an example of the physical force of prayer by having him feel the base of his chest while he pronounced the mantra "OM."

After the conclusion of the chess games, the four turned to telling ribald stories, while the host sung to a sort of guitar (p. 105). The slant-eyed man with the goatee spoke no English and little Russian. A mulatto servant brought in drink and food. Dukes noticed now that his host was of medium height, sturdily built and after they left that evening, Lev advises: "Call him Prince Ozay." Dukes was intrigued by the mystery of Ozay's identity. He seemed to him either Moslem or Parsee. "Ozay loved music . . .It was the musical side of what he had to say—the subject of chanting on a single breath—which most engrossed me, though I soon learned that this was bound up inextricably with everything else—physique, physics, philosophy. But he was not always easy to draw out. As a rule he was provokingly evasive . . . I try to get in a word about the matter that so much interests me—but he wants to play chess" (p. 106)

When Dukes returned to the subject at a subsequent meeting, Ozay said that the phrase in the Lord's Prayer "Hallowed be thy name" referred to the Name, or Logos "Then what was the 'logos' "A sound. The first sound . . . What you might call the world's tonic note" (p. 107). Fasting incites discovery of the name/logos. The sound is felt, since unheard sounds are most penetrable. Listen inwardly, Ozay said, and hear the blood like a cascade. Prayer is built on diet, breath and sex. The function of prayer is to attune the body: "Nobody can ever hope to attune himself perfectly in whom sex is weak, or undeveloped, or unbalanced, or abnormal" (p. 108). Incantation of prayer is the "science of Mantra." It is "the esoteric side of Christianity" (p. 109). To give Dukes

an experience of such prayer, Ozay instructed him to listen to a priest sing mass in the Orthodox Church. After Dukes later reported his observations, Ozay remarked: “in a few year, if you are persistent, you will note the results.” To Dukes’ expression of impatience, Ozay warned him that “truth must always be revealed in small doses, greatly diluted. And sound too, has to be rationed, especially the Name which is above every name, as your scriptures express it. That is why the Name must be hallowed. An overdoes might easily kill you before you’re trained for it. . . . Young man,” he said sternly, “I could kill you in an instant, sitting here, without either of us moving a muscle . . . Understand this clearly. No man can acquire this kind of knowledge without risking death. God misapplied is the Devil. There is only one force in creation. Good and evil lie merely in its application” (p. 113).

Webb’s speculation about Ozay’s “real” identity derives from his apparent similarity to the figure of Gurdjieff in “Glimpses of Truth,” the lead essay in *Views From the Real World*,⁶ that tells of an anonymous pupil’s visit and private conversion outlining Gurdjieff’s “system.” in the course of a single sitting. The Gurdjieff of “Glimpses” begins his exposé in a rough Russian which becomes more fluent to the listener as time passes.⁷ The instruction of a single pupil in an exotic setting, the striking appearance of the teacher, particularly his eyes, medium height, his regard for music and his disdain for “abnormal sex” all inform Webb’s conclusion that “it seems difficult to believe that there were two such teachers in the same area at the same time”(p. 88). Of course, Gurdjieff was in Moscow and Ozay in St. Petersburg, and both cities had their share of teachers of this sort. “Glimpses” is dated 1914, and Webb cites Ouspensky’s attribution of the text to Gurdjieff himself as a sort of advertisement for his work (p. 87).⁸ If “Glimpses” is a fictional advertisement, then its similarities to Dukes’ account loses some force as factual evidence of a connection between Ozay and Gurdjieff, though one can argue that an actual experience of the type Dukes recorded might have given Gurdjieff the idea for his fiction.

What, specifically, can we see as similarities sufficient to lead Webb to think that Ozay is a disguised Gurdjieff? To begin with, both men enjoyed sessions of ribald story telling, though Gurdjieff’s usually took place during Saturday baths. They make “home-brewed” alcoholic beverages. They both have dark piercing eyes, though that characteristic is common among those with hypnotic powers (Rasputin had extraordinary deep and penetrating eyes). Both Ozay and Gurdjieff are of medium height, though Dukes sees Ozay as thickset, while photos of Gurdjieff before his

⁶ Webb, p. 85. “The Papers of Janet Flanner and Solita Solano,” Library of Congress, Box 5, Subject File “Gurdjieff” includes a typescript of “Glimpses” under the title “The Reflexes of Truth.”

⁷ This impression is one that I have had listening to Gurdjieff speak at length. I suspect that the fluency is not Gurdjieff’s, but rather the incremental capacity of the listener to understand him. Gurdjieff seems to be able to have an attentive audience “attune” to his speech.

⁸ Ouspensky, *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 10, explains the probable origins of “Glimpses.”

accident in 1924 show him relatively lean. Both Ozay and Gurdjieff have particular regard for the powers of music, and both sing. Both the anonymous author of “Glimpses” and Dukes meet their teachers in exotic settings. Gurdjieff, however, is better known for meeting pupils, even initially, in public places (I know of no reliable account of Gurdjieff meeting pupils for the first time on one-to-one terms in a private place). Gurdjieff’s propensity for cafés in which to meet people and conduct business is well known and documented, and he would meet privately only with people he already knew). Dukes’ account suggests that Ozay was forced to meet with others in secret locations because he was in hiding, and there is no record of Gurdjieff being in hiding from St. Petersburg officials or anyone else at the time. The spirit of instruction of both appears similar, and both display lively senses of humour. More significantly similar is the obvious power of oral authority that Ozay and Gurdjieff both exercise. One could assume that Ozay had been schooled in places of which Gurdjieff would have been familiar, and one can suppose that if Ozay and Gurdjieff were not the same man, the one would have known of the other. William Patrick Patterson, who accepts Webb’s speculation on the grounds that the ideas of Ozay are “similar if not identical” to those of Gurdjieff, wonders why Dukes was unable to make the connection.⁹ Moore notes a linguistic detail that supports Webb’s speculation. He observes that *Ozay/Odzay* in Tibetan is “ray of light” (p. 341) and that “Ozay” sounds close to “Ushé,” the first name of Narzunoff, whom Webb suggests might well be Gurdjieff.

A close scan of Dukes’ account, however, suggests that Ozay is not cut from the same bolt of cloth as Gurdjieff. “Prince Ozay” is obviously a pseudonym, since Lev tells to Dukes to “call him” so, while Gurdjieff did not, to my knowledge, use pseudonyms. Ozay’s decorated silk dressing gown is not recognizable as an item of Gurdjieff’s wardrobe. Another questionable detail is the turban that Ozay wears. An informed source that prefers to remain anonymous suggests that, based upon his own extensive knowledge of Gurdjieff and Eastern customs, the detail of Ozay’s turban is a sign of Dukes’ fabrication. Turbans are not casual garments put on for an evening’s entertainment, he indicates, but apparel one is born to, and Gurdjieff was not born to it. True, anyone may wear a turban, though he must know how to wrap it, and anyone wearing a turban in St. Petersburg at that time would have attracted unwanted suspicion. Curiously, Ouspensky says that he had expected to see Gurdjieff in Moscow wearing a turban, but found him in a cafe wearing a quite ordinary black bowler.¹⁰ It would hardly make sense that Ozay wore a turban only when sequestered in his apartment, but donned other headwear for the street. Nonetheless, if Ozay were in hiding, one can assume that he rarely left his apartment at all.¹¹

⁹ *Struggle of the Magicians* (Fairfax, CA: Arete Publications, 1996), pp. 215–16.

¹⁰ *In Search of the Miraculous*, p. 5.

¹¹ My unidentified source assumes that Dukes invented the story of Ozay as a means of promoting his own Yoga interests against practices of Western Christianity. If, indeed, Dukes’ account is fiction, which is doubtful, a

Though Gurdjieff might have worn a turban in his Russian years, no one I have known remembers him wearing one in France or the United States. For his ordinary business and social outings at the time, Gurdjieff wore a brown fedora, and for public display wore often a *shapka* (his own term for a hat made of Astrakhan wool). Some of the dancers in his demonstrations did wear turbans with costumes, and James Moore reminds me that Kay Boyle having seen someone identified as Gurdjieff wearing a turban at a café in Paris in the spring of 1923. Her testimony is temporally flawed, however, for she could not have seen Gurdjieff at that time in Paris near Harold Loeb and Robert McAlmon, who identified the turbaned figure.¹² It is probable that none of the three had ever seen Gurdjieff before. McAlmon, who pointed Gurdjieff out may simply have *assumed* that the man in a turban was Gurdjieff, for he was not there at the time mentioned for the meeting. To begin with,

McAlmon says that Jane Heap, Margaret Anderson and Georgette Leblanc had already visited the Prieuré, but they arrived there in the summer of 1924 when Boyle was already back in New York. Earlier in the spring of 1924 Gurdjieff was still in America. Harold Loeb left Paris in the first week of 1925, so the scene could not have taken place in the spring of that year.¹³ McAlmon also speaks to Loeb of a boy who had been there two years, which would situate the scene after autumn 1924.

Equally telling is Dukes' remark that when he arrived he found Ozay playing chess and was prone to return to the board as an interlude during discussions. It is well known that Gurdjieff disdained "parlour games." Nick Putnam, husband of Gurdjieff's favourite niece "Lida" (Lydia) and an outstanding player of chess, backgammon and Russian Bank, was upbraided often by Gurdjieff for his "American" game habits.¹⁴ Further, Dukes' Ozay speaks at length about the importance of breath and breathing exercises. Gurdjieff, on the other hand, warned vehemently against such exercises.¹⁵

fictional Ozay could have been meant to reflect an actual Gurdjieff. Walter Driscoll, who has provided me with material for this review remarks, *à propos*, "One would hope that such a 'devotee' of spiritual truth would not trot out fictional characters in his autobiography."

¹² Robert McAlmon and Kay Boyle, *Being Geniuses Together 1920–1930* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1968), pp. 95–96. For the text, see my *Gurdjieff and Orage: Brothers in Elysium* (York Beach: Weiser Books, 2000), pp. 33–34. Photos of Gurdjieff in public at the time show him wearing a soft brimmed hat. Gurdjieff in his years in Asia did wear an Afghan and Uzbek headdress that has a turban-like wrap about its base. In Peter Brooks' film *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, the actor playing Gurdjieff wears one.

¹³ Harold Loeb, *The Way it Was* (New York, Criterion Books, 1959), pp. 157 and 206).

¹⁴ Nick told me once that to Gurdjieff's criticism of his game playing, he confessed his fault, but pleaded in his behalf that he did not dance the foxtrot. P. D. Ouspensky, *The Psychology of Man's Possible Evolution* (1966), p. 44, says that infatuation with games blocks one's essence. In *Tales*, game-playing is characterized as hasnamussian "pouring from the empty into the void." In *Life is real only then, when I am* (1975), p. 67, chastises American "ways of occupying time," and, p. 76, specifies playing cards.

¹⁵ In his Chicago lecture on 26 March 1924, reproduced in *Views From the Real World*, pp. 164–66, Gurdjieff explains that breath is a natural mechanical action whose rhythm must not be disturbed, and warns that artificially controlled breathing usually results in disharmony. He concludes: "If anyone here is experimenting with breathing, it is better to stop while there is still time. See also *Meetings With Remarkable Men*, p. 185, where the desert Dervish warns of the danger of eating and breathing exercises. In *Tales*, pp. 1011–1012, Beelzebub ridicules

Ozay teaches continence in diet and sex as well as breath, while Gurdjieff's Beelzebub ridicules monkish sexual abstinence, claiming it causes "an abundant deposit of fat."¹⁶ Gurdjieff did not recommend fasting generally, but prescribed diets occasionally in the treatment of specific disorders. In *Tales*, Beelzebub's Persian friend observes that the Mosaic ritual of periodic fasting had natural benefits in season, but is now no longer practiced.¹⁷ Ozay chants, and Gurdjieff is known to have been a good singer, yet the mutual interest they have in music is hardly rare among teachers of their ilk.¹⁸ Gurdjieff improvised on a harmonium, and Ozay plays a kind of guitar. Ozay's vaunting the power to kill with a musical tone reminds me that Gurdjieff once remarked that he had acquired such powers that he could kill a yak at a considerable distance,¹⁹ and he told Ouspensky that "there can be such music as would kill a man instantaneously."²⁰ Ozay emphasises oral performance of prayer to a far greater extent than Gurdjieff had.²¹ Ozay emphasises the Upanishad mantra *OM* (which he cleverly aligns with the homophonic English word *home*) that Gurdjieff did not. René Daumal reported that Gurdjieff understood the mantra *A U M* as an evocation of the three states of human consciousness.²²

While Gurdjieff's teaching in "Glimpses" reveals a philosophical and psychological system, Ozay's teaching concentrates on diet and breath. Ozay says he had been in England and America where he remarked upon singing and praying practices in church services. Gurdjieff never claimed to have been in either country before he travelled to these places in the 1920s. One might speculate that Ozay invents his travels in order to emphasise a point about the weakness of Western prayer, but what he says of English prayer is noted by Dukes to be an accurate observation of English church practice. Furthermore, Ozay's matter and manner of speech do not echo Gurdjieff's known matter and manner, though he touches here and there at points along Gurdjieff's

Christian fasting practices. Bennett, *Gurdjieff: Making a New World*, p. 220 mentions that Gurdjieff did recommend both fasting and breath exercises in special contexts.

¹⁶ See "The Holy Planet 'Purgatory'" in *All and Everything*, p. 779. Citing Gurdjieff, Orage told his pupils on October 1, 1927, that "the real function of sex is not procreation but something associated with the highest concept you can attach to the word 'will' . . . The true use of sex can only be brought about through Individuality, Consciousness and Will" (Manchester Papers, p. 54). In *Search*, p. 256, Ouspensky says that Gurdjieff advised sexual abstinence in particular cases.

¹⁷ *All and Everything*, p. 1011 ff.

¹⁸ There is nothing in Ozay's talk that reflects Gurdjieff's conception of true, or objective music. See *Views From the Real World*, p. 35.

¹⁹ See *Life is real*, p. 20. In Gurdjieff's chapter "The Bokharian Dervish," *Tales*, pp. 881–911, There is a lengthy discussion of the beneficent and malefic powers of musical and electrical vibrations.

²⁰ *In Search of the Miraculous* (Harcourt; Brace and World, 1949), p. 297.

²¹ See Ouspensky's *A New Model Of the Universe* (1960), 192–93 for a reading of the Lord's Prayer as an esoteric code. For Ouspensky, repetition itself can be the point of prayer. His illustration of this point with reference to the "Pilgrim's Prayer" was picked up by J. D. Salinger in his *Franny and Zooey* (1961) whose heroine tries to recover from a nervous breakdown by repeating the "Pilgrim's Prayer" interminably.

²² Jean-Louis Accarias, Jean-Michel Agasse, et al, edd., *René Daumal ou le retour à soi* (Paris: l'Originel, 1981), p. 83.

psychological vector of discourse. More telling is the fact that Ozay speaks only rudimentary Russian and almost fluent English. Dukes thinks Ozay might be Turk, Tartar or Tibetan (the turban is a traditional headdress of Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, but not of Turks, Tartars or Tibetans, a fact Dukes should have known), but he does not distinguish an identifiable accent in his Russian or English. There is no indication from either Gurdjieff's later career or his activities in St. Petersburg and Moscow that he could speak any English. On the contrary, he spoke of his lack of knowledge of Western European languages before arriving in Germany.²³

Though differences appear to outweigh similarities between Ozay and Gurdjieff, one must take into account the recognized biographical authority of James Moore who accepts the common identity of Ozay and Gurdjieff unequivocally. Without giving a nod to Webb's speculative stance, Moore says that in the winter of 1913, Gurdjieff "acquired his first foreign pupil—significantly enough, an Englishman".²⁴ In a later scan of Gurdjieff's skills he accords him Ozay's guitar playing and mantra chanting (p. 350). In his own summary of Dukes' story, he simply inserts the name "Gurdjieff" for the person Lev Lvovitch tells Dukes to call "Ozay" (p. 74), and attributes to Gurdjieff forthwith the words and gestures that Dukes attributes to Ozay.

Though Moore neither addresses obvious dissimilarities in Dukes' recollection between Ozay and Gurdjieff nor cites the authority of other sources, he embellishes the received version. He begins his overview of the story by emphasizing the historicity of Lev Lvovitch, whom he calls "Gurdjieff's earliest associate in St. Petersburg" (p. 71). The historicity of Lev need not be put in question, but Moore insists that, despite his aura of being a figure out of fiction, "Lvovitch lived" (p. 71). He repeats the description of Lev's dress and physical characteristics that Dukes recalls earlier when he first met him in the apartment of a client (Dukes, p. 67), then goes on to identify the slant-eyed chess opponent of Ozay who speaks little Russian as "in all probability the formidable Shamzaran Badmieff," (p. 74) This is the same person he had mentioned three pages earlier as Badmaieff, the Buryat godson of Alexander III. The reader might reasonably wish for more evidence since it is not clear why Badmaieff should speak little Russian (Russian was an obligatory school language in the Buryat region even before Soviet policy enforced a linguistic hegemony in non-Russian areas).²⁵ Fixing his attention on Lev, Moore claims that "sober and independent witnesses heard Lvovitch talking with

²³ See *Life is real only then, when I am*, p. 30, where Gurdjieff in early 1924 says that he and others in his entourage "knew not one word of the local language" of America.

²⁴ *Gurdjieff*, p. 74. Later, he calls Dukes Gurdjieff's first English pupil (p. 167).

²⁵ The Buryat Mongol Republic of the USSR was in Russian hands in the late 17th century. The western part of the republic around Lake Baikal was thoroughly Russianized in the following century, with the Cyrillic alphabet replacing Mongolian. The area is noted for shamans. In a personal communication of 20 June 2001, Michael Benham reported that he had failed to find any link between Gurdjieff and Badmaev in his research in Russian literature about Badmaev that he had scanned. In his letter to Rom Landau, cited by Louis Pauwels, *Gurdjieff* (Douglas: Times Press, p.1964), p. 61 identifying Gurdjieff as Dordjieff, Achmed Abdullah says that Dordjieff was a Russian Buddhist Buriat.

Gurdjieff in “a language of the rocky wastes and inaccessible hills” (p. 71), and cites Dukes for the information. Dukes makes no such statement, however, but rather recalls that Prince Ozay identifies his *own* language in the song he sings as “a language of the rocky wastes and inaccessible hills” (p. 105). Misattribution of a quote here makes phantoms of Moore’s “sober and independent witnesses,” and, ineluctably, puts into question the viability of his other evidence.

Had Moore reviewed Dukes’ earlier exposition of Lev’s career he might have found in it more of a resemblance to Gurdjieff than Ozay. Though he has blue eyes, he is of the same physical stature—Like Gurdjieff, when a young man, he nearly died in Central Asia. After his recovery he took as his mission in life to heal the sick (Dukes, p. 76). As Gurdjieff did, Lev worked medical wonders with hypnotism, and explains to Dukes that the ailments, largely psychological, are cured with “good spirits” (pp. 74–78). Dukes witnesses Lev’s treatments of a boy with a paralysed leg (p. 69) and an alcoholic (p. 73), and effects cures of the sort Gurdjieff has been credited with.²⁶ Like Gurdjieff, who advertised a fee in St. Petersburg of one thousand roubles, Lev charges high fees that he justifies for psychological reasons. Like Gurdjieff, he turned away no one, allowing those who were impecunious to leave in a box what money they would. It is understandable why, in this respect, that Moore calls Lev a Gurdjieff associate

Besides these distinctions, there is more “negative” circumstantial evidence that would belie the identification of Ozay with Gurdjieff. To begin with, Dukes met Lev and Ozay in 1913, and lost contact with both of them just before the outbreak of the Revolution he (p. 114). His visits to Ozay, then, took place during those years precisely when Gurdjieff was shuttling between Moscow and St. Petersburg to meet groups of pupils, none of which included Dukes. To have private meetings with a single pupil over a period of two or three years was not Gurdjieff’s *modus operandi* unless that person served a particular office for him. Moore says that Gurdjieff abandoned the “‘Prince Ozay’ persona” in the spring of 1924, a few months after meeting Dukes, and about the time Gurdjieff attracted Leonid Stjoernal to him (p. 324). If this is so, then Dukes listened to an undisguised Gurdjieff for a considerable amount of time, though his autobiography does not mention his name as someone he knew in the St. Petersburg days.

In fact, it is in Paris in the 1920s that Dukes saw Nadine Nikolaeva-Legat whom he recognized as a pupil of both Ouspensky and Gurdjieff (p. 162), so the association of these two in St. Petersburg must have been known to him. From Ouspensky himself in

²⁶ Dukes himself, during a summer in the country, practices the same sort of hypnotic suggestion and is soon besieged by peasants who believe him to be a miracle doctor (p. 82). In “Glimpses,” p. 54, Gurdjieff remarks that a charlatan’s success is a placebo. In Chapter xxxiii of *Tales*, Beelzebub relates his experiences as a doctor-hypnotist whose cures depended not, as Lev’s did, upon evocation of good spirits, but by using the power of suggestion to alter blood circulation. In *Meetings*, Gurdjieff tells of the hypnotic skills of Dr. Ekim Bey, and in *Life*, p. 24, Gurdjieff says that he gave up hypnotism before beginning his teaching in Russia.

London over a decade later he heard much of Gurdjieff in conversations about Egypt. “My curiosity [about the Great Pyramid and Sphinx] was further fanned,” he wrote, “by the Russian philosopher P. D. Ouspensky, with whom I used to sit up long nights discussing mysticism, in particular the system of G. I. Gurdjieff, undoubtedly one of the great living teachers, whom Ouspensky acknowledged as master, but from whom he had none the less parted company. Ouspensky lent me the advance manuscript of parts of his book ‘A New Model of the Universe’ in which he describes the Great Pyramid as a living organism” (p. 177).²⁷ The period after Ouspensky’s defection from Gurdjieff and before the publication of *A New Model of the Universe* is between 1924 and 1931, and Dukes’ recollection seems to place these meetings in 1928 or 1929 when he was moving between London, Geneva and Paris. Dukes heard much of Gurdjieff in these and perhaps other conversations with Ouspensky (Webb, p. 84),²⁸ but there is nothing in his recollections to imply that he had met Gurdjieff personally. Intrigued by Ouspensky’s theory of the organic pyramids, in 1936 Dukes went himself to Egypt, where he succeeded in entering the King’s Chamber of the Great Pyramid (pp. 194–99). There he recited the Lord’s Prayer and the mantra OM in Ozay fashion. The sound echoed and billowed about him rendering Dukes unconscious. He recalled the feeling he had in the Alexander Nevsky Abbey after Ozay had sent him to experience the force of sounds that could even kill (pp. 111–13). He understood then what Ouspensky had meant when he said that the walls of the pyramids were alive (p. 199).

In effect, after the war Dukes had given up his musical career to travel in quest of esoteric knowledge. Even before meeting Ozay he had read Blavatsky, gone to séances, and met professional hypnotists (pp. 49–65). After the war, part of which he spent as a soldier in the Soviet Army (for food and lodging), he investigated in the United States what he called “weird cults” (p. 120) and became interested in Yoga. He continued breathing exercises following Ozay’s directions (pp. 150–51), and started each day standing on his head for five minutes to stimulate blood circulation to his lungs. Throughout the 20s, 30s and 40s Dukes was often for long periods of time in places associated with Gurdjieff, particularly Geneva, Paris and New York. It would seem that, if what he heard from Ouspensky and others of Gurdjieff suggested Ozay, he would have mentioned it in his writings and sought to meet again the man who had so influenced his development in Yoga studies. Supposing Dukes had no desire to meet Gurdjieff, one can assume that he had other avenues for his quest that were more associated with Ozay’s Yoga than Ouspensky’s and Gurdjieff’s Fourth Way. Later in his life Dukes searched for the secrets of mortal longevity and compiled statistics on the

²⁷ For Gurdjieff’s view of the pyramids as observatories, see *Tales*, p. 286 and 304. Later, p. 906, Beelzebub speaks of architectural vibrations that “change for better or for worse the subjective vibrations of the people and animals there.”

²⁸ Webb, p. 84, says that Dukes “later became a regular dining companion of Ouspensky,” but offers no dates.

population of centenarians (p. 209). That search for “Methuselahs” and his “unending quest” for ancient and esoteric wisdom that he yearned to recover (pp. 254–55) make of him, nonetheless, a man Gurdjieff would recognize in the process of perfecting himself.

Taking all of these aspects of Dukes’ career into account, Webb’s speculative and Moore’s certain association of Ozay with Gurdjieff simply lacks credibility. Unfortunately, that association is now embedded in received opinion.²⁹ True enough, Dukes’ Ozay appears a wondrous man, someone whose company Gurdjieff might have enjoyed and would have enjoyed a drink and chat with, at the least. He might have been Ushe Narzunoff, but he was not Gurdjieff. The cautious reader is well advised—unless fresh and conclusive evidence comes to light—to assign the identification of Gurdjieff with Ozay to the dustbin of Gurdjieff apocrypha.³⁰



Paul Beekman Taylor

²⁹ In a 9 February 2002 communication to me, in response to a draft of this paper, James Moore defends his position thus “. . . given all the scholarship and direct experience to which the Council [of the Gurdjieff Society] had recourse to in England, France, and the USA, . . . I find it difficult to suppose that this so-to-say incorporation of Ozay into the Gurdjieffian canon took place without some sort of defensible check. And although that check must lack—as I express it—a DNA match, it probably ranked as high on the probability scale as we are likely to attain.”

³⁰ J. Walter Driscoll, who invited this review of the Ozay question, has provided research materials and editorial advice. James Moore and Sophia Wellbeloved read earlier drafts and offered corrections and advice. I take responsibility for the errors that remain.