

Mrs. Nott and Katherine Mansfield

J. Walter Driscoll

Mrs C. S. Nott (née Rose Mary Cynthia Lillard (1897-1979))—a gifted pianist, musicologist, and trained Dalcroze Eurhythmics instructor ¹ from Houston, Texas, who in 1922-1923 became the first American to attend Gurdjieff's Institute. There she befriended Katherine Mansfield. Rose Mary Lillard was prominent in A. R. Orage's New York Gurdjieff group. Between 1923 and 1928 she assisted Orage in group meetings, led Movements classes, and took over the Institute archives there in his absence. With Jeanne de Salzmann and Jessmin Howarth—both were fellow dancer-musician-Eurhythmics-teachers (and Howarth was then choreographer for the Paris Opera)—Rose Mary Nott became responsible for teaching and preserving Gurdjieff's Movement exercises, particularly after his death. She married C. S. Nott, another prominent Gurdjieff pupil. The most detailed accounts yet published about Mrs Rose Mary Nott ² are contained in A. R. Orage's letters published in Paul Beekman Taylor's *Gurdjieff and Orage: Brothers in Elysium* (2001) and in [James Moore's *Gurdjieffian Confessions*](#) (2005). Moore acknowledges Mrs Nott's vital Movements classes and her poignant encouragement of his 1980 biography *Gurdjieff and Mansfield*. He recalls visiting Mrs Nott as part of his research. Having 'actually helped Olgivanna and Adele Kafian to minister to Katherine's physical needs', Rose Mary Nott was—by December 1978—living with nursing support, 'practically wrecked by arthritis and every rotten geriatric complication'

"Write the book...write the book, Jim. *Make yourself some money!*", insisted Mrs Nott, sweeping aside the delicate cobweb of my moral reservations... Prudently enough, Mrs Nott's doctors had insisted she abstain from alcohol, yet she did not spurn the bottle of Chivas Regal whisky which I brought along on the off-chance. We sat opposite each other at a small table; and in close-up her distinctive walnut-shaped face appeared more crinkled than ever.

"How do you find it to be old?" I asked without impudence.

"I hate it," she snapped emphatically. Yet somewhere beneath the ravaged exterior I intuited a fair young woman, a fair young dancer, absolutely unimpaired.

"Poor Catherine..." added Mrs Nott with compressed feeling; and suddenly I saw, silhouetted against all those clever biographies and literary studies, the bowed, coughing, breathless, suffering, human being she had tried to help. ³

¹ Emile Jaques-Dalcroze (1865-1950) Swiss musician-educator, developed the Eurhythmics dance method of simultaneously experiencing music as movement and learning music theory.

² References to Rose Mary Lillard are sometimes contracted to the elision 'Rosemary'.

³ James Moore *Gurdjieffian Confessions: a self remembered*. Gurdjieff Studies Ltd, 2005, pp 252-53.