

1

This is a sketch for a story about connections and about the people I call 'oilers' who make it possible for connections – of the sort that change the world – to occur by chance.

It is also a story about modernism, but it starts with something Medieval. And, in a post-modern world, where stories can have more than one ending, it is a story with a post-modern conclusion.

2



This is the **Great Hall** at Dartington, built in 1350, derelict in 1925 when this picture was taken.

3



It was rescued by Leonard Elmhirst, an agricultural scientist, seen here in India in the 1920s with the poet-philosopher **Rabindranath Tagore**. Like Tagore, Elmhirst was interested in rural regeneration and the connections between the social and the spiritual.

4



Leonard Elmhirst trained to be a modernising agriculturalist at Cornell, where he met **Dorothy Straight**, seen here in a photograph by Cecil Beaton. She was recently widowed, adventurous, liberal and (a Whitney by birth) very rich. They married, bought Dartington and created a Trust with \$1m a year to spend (at 1920s prices). Together they embarked on an ambitious project of social regeneration.

5



First, they rebuilt the Dartington Hall Estate. They employed 1,000 people and trained them in the skills of medieval manufacture, visible here in the fabrication of the oak beams that support the roof of the **Great Hall**.

6



Another of their early aspirations was to start a residential school. They looked to the United States and to W.B. Curry who at **Oak Lane School** in Philadelphia had established a progressive model of education that could challenge the orthodoxy of the English private boarding system. Curry was the creator of Dartington Hall School, a famous experiment in progressive, co-educational residential education.

7



Curry was a friend of **William Lescaze**, a Swiss-American architect who with George Howe, designed the PSFS building in Philadelphia, the first international style skyscraper in the United States and a landmark of the modern movement. Lescaze is also remembered for his New York houses, exemplified by these two in **East 48th Street**.

8



One of Curry's prizes for coming to Dartington was the opportunity to design two schools from scratch. He asked Lescaze to build a **headmaster's house**, a commission that led him into a collaboration with an English architect, Robert Hening.



9



Their work at Dartington included **Warren House**, which was built for Kurt Jooss, the director of Ballets Jooss, who escaped to Dartington from Nazi Europe.

From Dartington the Ballets made an influential tour of California; Jooss became one of the founding fathers of American modern dance.



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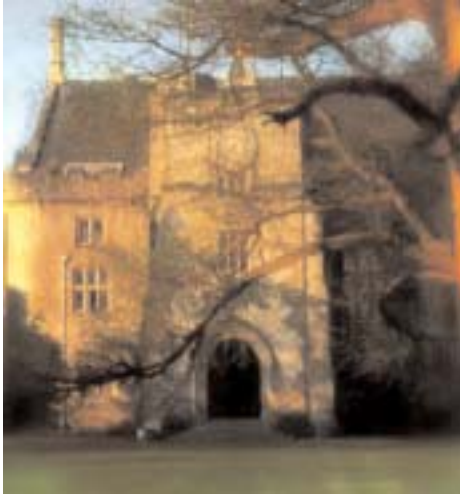


Lescaze and Hening, meanwhile, also built the **administrative offices** at Shinners Bridge, Dartington and a street of houses on the Estate, as well as **dormitories** and a **gymnasium** for Dartington Hall School.

11

Seeking a new headmaster for the School in 1963, Dartington looked towards Cambridge and to Royston Lambert, the director a new research centre at Kings College specialising in innovative studies of residential education. Lambert brought his research unit with him to the Estate, and an experiment in 'cross cultural' work began. The school invited working class children from the North of England to live with the predominantly middle class children in the private boarding school, and, in return, Dartington boarders went to live in the coal mining communities of the Dearne Valley.

12



This is the heart of the Estate. I came here in 1983 to join three other child welfare researchers at Dartington Social Research Unit, which by then had emerged from Royston Lambert's work at King's College. We shared three attic rooms in the **Medieval courtyard**.

13



Now another story, also beginning in the 1920s.

The group of 'posers' standing in front of the Goethe-Schiller monument in the main square of Weimar are members of the revolutionary Bauhaus School.

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Here posing as Goethe and Schiller on the beach at Hendaye a few years later are the Bauhaus painters **Wassily Kandinsky** and **Paul Klee**.

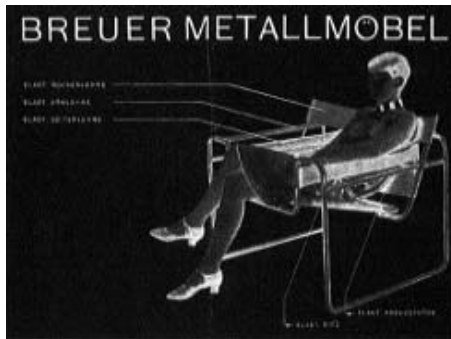
They are pretending to embody the concept of 'classical modernism' to show that they are reviving Goethe's attempts to bring science and art together after the schisms of the Enlightenment.

15



In its early years Bauhaus teaching was a curious mixture of art, science and mysticism. It sought to promote simultaneously 'objective understanding and an aptitude for subjective experience'.

More simply, the Bauhaus is famous for being far ahead of its time as a combining force in art and technology. This is Marcel Breuer's **club armchair** designed 1926 and still looking chic.



16



These are Bauhaus **wall hangings** from 1923 by Gunta Stolzl.

17



Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee were among the great names of the 20th century. Some of what they wrote about the meaning of art was as influential as their painting. Most modernist art and design teaching in Europe and the United States has its roots in the Bauhaus School.

18



Art and science find a synthesis in architecture; and Bauhaus architects were also hugely influential.

This is one of the **Master's houses** designed by **Walter Gropius** at the Bauhaus's second home in Dessau.

19



These buildings in [Lake Shore Drive, Chicago](#) are by [Mies van der Rohe](#), the third director of the Bauhaus. He, too, escaped to America from Germany and made his reputation there.

20



The Bauhaus architectural influence continued to the end of the century. This Chicago building is by Mies Van der Rohe's pupil, **Bertrand Goldberg**. It appears to challenge the master's influence, but it remains essentially a Bauhaus building in function.

21

How did we get from 1919 Weimar to the Chicago skyline? And where does Dartington fit in?



Walter Gropius, seen here with his wife Ise, was a veteran of the First World War. He presented the Weimar authorities with an argument that the reform of design education was vital to Germany's future prosperity. His perceptions were shared by those in government as they tried to rebuild the economy.

22



Gropius's vision was that artists should become the craftsman of industry. With Johannes Itten, he established a core curriculum to bridge the arts and crafts, leading to areas of specialism. (Previously, students had been apprenticed to a master specialist, and seldom exposed to other influences).

The School started in Weimar in 1919. But Weimar was the first German State to have a Nazi majority government and so in 1925 it fled to Socialist **Dessau**.

23



Gropius left the Bauhaus in 1928 and returned to private practice, leaving Hans Mayer to take over. Mies Van der Rohe took the reins from Mayer in 1930. The School remained under constant attack and in 1932 was forced to move to Berlin, only to close down the following year.

It later resurfaced at **Black Mountain College**, North Carolina as well as in Chicago, but without any great effect. Its huge contribution rests on the 14 years in Weimar, Dessau and Berlin.

24



Learning of the plight of the School as it was being pursued around Germany, Dorothy and Leonard Elmhirst, the founders of Dartington sent donations. From 1930 onwards they were funding Mies and in 1933 they paid for Gropius to come to England and to settle in the London Hampstead artists' colony which they also subsidised. The colony is itself a case study in unusual connections. It gave safe haven to Lazlo Moholy-Nagy and Marcel Breuer as well as to Spanish Civil War refugees. The company included Agatha Christie, Stephen Spender, George Orwell and Louis MacNeice, also Aldous and Julian Huxley, the painters Ben Nicholson and Piet Mondrian and members of the Freud family.

25



Gropius was in regular correspondence with the Elmhursts from 1932. There was much to draw him to Dartington, particularly Lescaze's **headmaster's house**.



26



Dartington also had a furniture workshop, where it developed its own 'Lamda' chair, and it had installed in the Great Hall **woven textiles** by Elizabeth Peacock showing a strong Bauhaus influence.

27



Gropius visited Dartington several times in 1934/5. He drew up plans for bringing a unified character to Dartington products and for opening a shop in central London to sell them. He made designs for an **open air performance arena** in the Dartington gardens and had a hand in the rebuilding of the Barn theatre. The Elmhirsts helped him to set up a private practice with Maxwell Fry and they furnished him with all kinds of useful connections.

28



The Elmhursts introduced Gropius to Henry Morris who was what Americans would call a superintendent for education. Morris was attempting to stem the decline of community in small towns and villages. He had the idea of village colleges, each serving six villages, providing not only education but all children's services and a sense of community. The first was to be in Impington in Cambridgeshire.

Gropius and his partner Maxwell Fry were commissioned to build the **Impington Community College**, a pioneering example of modernism in the UK. It represents the apotheosis of Dartington type connections. Its architecture brought people to Morris's innovation in education. And the education breakthroughs introduced modernist architecture to a wide public.

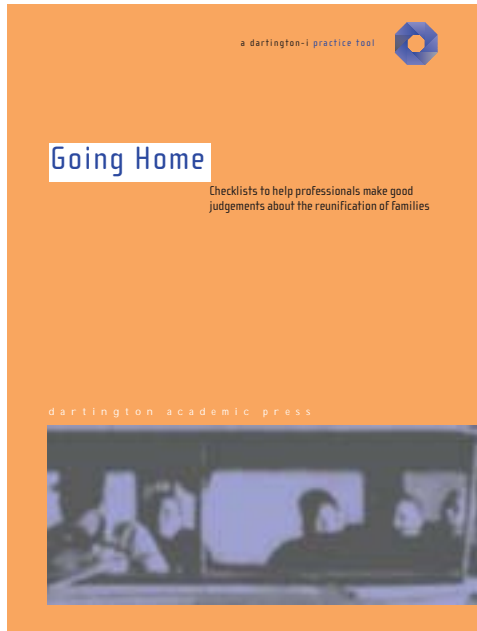
29



The Elmhirsts continued to oil Gropius's connections in the United States and in 1937 he was appointed Professor of Architecture at Harvard. By 1938, the Bauhaus' reputation was secure: there was a retrospective at the [Museum of Modern Art](#) in New York

30

Why am I interested in all this? I was trained as a fairly orthodox social scientist. In 1982 I was invited to a seminar at Dartington about the dissemination of research and was inspired by the potential to make research work well beyond its essential elements of hypothesis, data collection, report and publication. I became a part of the research team in 1983 and took some responsibility for its direction a decade ago.



Some of what I have tried to do at Dartington is visible in the Common Language materials that have been the focus of my work at Chapin Hall. The ethos of my approach to the Common Language project owes much to the Bauhaus. Here is a summary of the points of connection.

32

We focused on achieving better outcomes for children and families; and we saw the means for achieving that goal in **high quality evidence applied to policy and practice**.

We also took from the Bauhaus, **the importance of product**. We write books and articles, but we also produce practice tools, information for consumers, government guidance, CDs and tapes. We design new services for children, too.

We are a charitable foundation but we apply ourselves with **the rigour of a commercial business** and treat the people who fund our work as customers.

We work hard to bring together people who would not otherwise meet in a context where they can learn from each other. **We try to be innovative by making new connections**.

33

We are building a curriculum for research students that crosses traditional boundaries and links training and practice in new ways.

We were determinedly international. We operate in nine European and two US states and have offices in the US and Spain as well as in Devon.

With the Common Language project, we have begun to use research not only to report on what is happening in children's services but as a craft integral to children's services.

We see design as integral to the theory and practice of what we do.