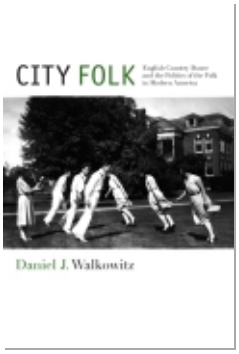
3 Orderly Bodies: Dancing London, 1900–1914



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Orderly Bodies: Dancing London, 1900–1914

I'll try anything once, except incest and morris dancing.
—Linzi Drew, a British stripper (also attributed to Oscar Wilde, Sir Arnold Bax, Sir Thomas Beecham, and George Bernard Shaw, among others)[1]

Elizabeth Burchenal seems to have been the first twentieth-century American to voyage to London in search of folk dance roots, going perhaps as early as 1903. Around 1903 or 1904, she traveled from village to village in Denmark, Norway, Germany, Sweden, France, Ireland, and Spain collecting folk dances that she subsequently published in New York. She then visited England to see morris dancing at Bampton and Bidford, which Cecil Sharp had only recently collected and published.[2]

Burchenal was, though, but the first of a cadre of American pilgrims of English origin in search of a usable folk past—both of their own roots and of an Anglo-American tradition that they could, in the most benevolent construction, "share" with newcomers. The roster of visitors illustrates the elite character of the revival project as progressive reform, but it also illustrates the larger tensions in this gender- and social-class-inflected Progressive-Edwardian-era project between social (and socialist) reform and paternalist if not imperial (and imperious) social control. Pittsburgh's Mrs. James Dawson Callery's husband was president of Baragua Sugar Company and chairman of the board of the Philadelphia Company, the Duquense Light Company, and the Pittsburgh Railway Company. Helen Osborne Storrow's husband, James Jackson Storrow of Boston (he and his wife lived on an estate in neighboring Lincoln), was an investment banker and social reformer, and he and his wife were major philanthropists to heritage, environmental, and Girl Scouts projects.[3]

Few of the pilgrims may have been as wealthy as Mrs. Callery or Helen Storrow, and most worked for a living as part of the growing (semi)professional class made up of people such as teachers and social workers, but they

were all sufficiently wealthy and privileged to afford to travel to Europe on holiday and to do so first class. Mary Wood Hinman, for instance, was a leading settlement house worker from Chicago's Hull House. In the years before World War I, and before leaving to try her hand at acting in Los Angeles, she ran pageants and programs of folk and interpretative dance at the progressive Francis Parker School, where one of her young protégés was the distinguished modern dancer Doris Humphrey.[4]

Not surprisingly, the largest contingent of American devotees of English Country Dance came from the city prized for its Anglophile elites with English heritage: Boston. In addition to Storrow, they included Harvard professor of dramatic literature George P. Baker and two adventuresome enthusiasts who were introduced to ECD on the Storrow lawn in Lincoln in 1913 or 1914, Louise Chapin and Dorothy Bolles. These four Bostonians later took on major institutional roles as ECD organizers and dance teachers in the United States.[5]

Americans visiting England to learn country dance encountered an exciting movement, but they remained largely oblivious to an underlying fractiousness that swirled about Sharp. In fact, the Americans were sometimes unwittingly the subject of disputes, but in truth, sometimes they appeared deliberately to aggravate the conflict. The most profound and earliest dispute involved the two people who took the lead in the revival in England, Mary Neal and Cecil Sharp. Their relationship began at about the same time as Burchenal would have arrived in their midst, although there is no evidence she met with either of them until a few years later.

Mary Neal

The English folk dance revival may properly be said to have begun with Mary Neal, a woman every bit as imposing and outspoken as Sharp. Sharp had put his experience with the Headington Morrismen behind him and moved on to collecting folk song. It was Neal's success with folk dance that reawakened his interest in dance in 1905.

Born on June 5, 1860, and christened Sophia Clara, Mary Neal was the daughter of a well-to-do Birmingham button manufacturer. Tall, curly haired, and, according to her lifelong close friend, the suffragette Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence, "extremely emaciated," Neal's "vivid blue eyes" lit up a room. "She brought into the atmosphere the sparkle of a clear, frosty, winter day." She was also a woman with strong opinions and a sharp tongue (no pun intended) that made her quite Sharp's equal when it came, as it did, to trading barbs.[6] But that lay in the future.

Mary Neal. (Reproduced courtesy of EFDSS)

As a young woman, Neal read of the horrid conditions of the London poor in Andrew Mearns's pamphlet "The Bitter Cry of Outcast London" and resolved to do something about it. She moved to London in 1888 to join the Methodist West London Mission as a "Sister of the Poor" (later, after reading a biography of St. Francis of Assisi, she described her work as in his tradition) and took the name Sister Mary.[7] She was joined in this work in 1891 by Emmeline Pethick (who married Frederick Lawrence in October of that year). Together, committed to the gospel of socialism and the labor movement, they established the Espérance Club and Social Guild for girls in 1895 (*espérance* being French for "hopefulness"), a social settlement based in Cumberland Market, St. Pancreas. The club attracted the working girls of Soho and Marylebone—seamstresses and tailoresses—and Neal and Pethick-Lawrence set up an adjunct commercial tailoring establishment, Maison Espérance. A socialist model shop, it had wages nearly double the norm, regular year-round employment, and a forty-five-hour work week. To ensure that her working girls also

experienced regular holidays, Neal also purchased (jointly with a Jewish girls' club) a house in Littlehampton that she named "The Green Lady Hostel."[8]

Throughout her life, Neal's vocation in social work on behalf of the dispossessed—poor working girls, in particular—was her passion and her mission, and she embraced song and dance to enliven the girls. As seamstresses, the girls of the club were "mostly employed in sedentary work," as Neal saw it, and so "made dancing, singing and acting as chief occupations." Pethick-Lawrence, as the club's musical director, introduced Scottish song and dance at the Christmas party in 1903. When Emmeline left her position shortly thereafter to turn her attention full-time to woman's suffrage, at the suggestion of the new musical director, Herbert MacIlwaine, the club moved on to Irish song and dance the next year.[9]

But by 1905, Neal had a problem. Espérance girls seemed bored of the songs they traditionally sang at the Christmas party, and she needed an alternative. They had tried Scottish and Irish; what were they to do next? Then on July 29, 1905, MacIlwaine read in the *Morning Post* of Cecil Sharp collecting songs by "unlettered folks in remote country villages . . . which had been traditionally handed down from singer to singer." Enticed, MacIlwaine proposed to Neal that such songs would be ideal for the "unlettered members of their singing class," who "would probably take to these songs as to no others, [as] . . . they were the natural inheritance of the country folks."[10]

Neal "longed for some life-giving wind" to "lessen the weariness" of her girls and resolved to go see Sharp a few days later. Sharp, who at the time was in a dispute with the managers of the Hampstead Conservatory of Music about his use of the facilities, was threatening to leave his position as director. (He continued to be music master at Ludgrove, the preparatory school for Eton, to which he commuted.) Conflict over authority often swirled about Sharp, but at this point it worked to his favor: he was ready to move in new directions. Hearing Neal's request for "unlettered" songs for her girls, Sharp was "enchanted." He visited the club a few weeks later and was delighted at their singing. But as the Christmas season neared, Neal asked Sharp if there happened to be any country dances "in harmony with their [songs'] spirits?" He told her of his encounter with Headington dancers almost seven years previous and gave her Kimber's contact information.

Sharp's referral set Neal and the dance revival into motion. Neal traveled to Oxford and met with Kimber. Two morris dancers subsequently went to London and taught the Espérance girls dances that had traditionally been done only by men. So, ironically, given the rancorous debates over authenticity in the dance form that were soon to erupt, the first dance of the folk dance

revival consisted of half a dozen morris dances such as "Bean Setting," "Constant Billy," "Blue-Eyed Stranger," and "Shepherd's Hey" that were danced by a girls' club.[11] Neal and the Espérance girls had begun the dance revival with a gender inversion.

When Neal contacted Sharp about folk song and dance in 1905, however, she awakened an old interest in him that had lain dormant. Until then, Sharp's focus had been on folk song. Sharp had had Kimber teach him morris dances shortly after the Boxing Day performance, but an encounter in 1903 with a Somerset gardener with the apocryphal name of John England had redirected him to folk song. Sharp had overheard the gardener singing "The Seeds of Love" and got England to give him the words to transcribe. That evening, in formal dress, Sharp had his vocalist Mattie Kay sing it to his accompaniment at a choir supper: The irony of dressing up the occasion was not lost on the gardener: "John was proud, but doubtful about the 'evening dress' [worn by Sharp and Kay]; there had been no piano to his song."[12]

The experience with John England transformed Sharp, and he turned to collecting folk songs. He published his first book of folk songs in 1902, *A Book of British Song for Home and School*, and by 1907 he had collected more than fifteen hundred tunes. By the end of 1903, he had begun to lecture on folk song, and one such occasion was the event that MacIlwaine read about in the newspaper. By 1904, Sharp had established himself as the emerging authority on English folklore, crowding out earlier collectors such as Sabine Baring-Gould and Lucy Broadwood. Sharp was that year elected to the committee of the Folk-Song Society, an organization that had been floundering since its founding in 1898.[13]

Just as Sharp had begun to establish himself as a folk song authority, the wondrous 1905 Christmas party performance of the Espérance girls moved folk dance onto Sharp's agenda. He later described seeing the Espérance girls sing and dance as the "turning point of his life" (although he had described seeing the Headington Morrismen in 1899 the same way). The audience's response to the girls was similarly electric. Recounting the experience nearly two decades later, Neal waxed poetic. Having become by this point a committed theosophist, Neal combined an almost religious reverence with a paean to supposedly primeval virtues revived by the dance. She wrote in her memoir, "And that night there awoke, after generations of sleep, a little stir of an older life, an older rhythm, an older force, in tune with a simpler life, a sweeter music, . . . [with] vibrations . . . and rhythms of an older world, a world untouched by machinery and mechanized power but responsive to the vibrant rhythm of sea and wind, earth and stone." Laurence Hausman, one of the writ-

ers among the audience of two hundred (which evidently included the labor leader Kier Hardie), prophesied a great revival, telling Neal that she "must not keep such a national possession in the narrow area of a Girls' Club."[14]

Neal picked up the challenge and took the girls on the road. For social elites, they performed their identity as the folk, giving the first performance of folk dance and song and singing games at the Queen's Hall in London on April 3, 1906; they similarly performed in concert for well-heeled young men (and presumably their women guests) at Fellows' Lawn at Trinity College, Cambridge, and at Eton College. They also, however, brought the dance to village and working-class youth, dancing in villages, schools, training colleges, and factories from Norfolk to Devon. "Everywhere," according to Neal, these "boys and girls . . . welcomed these songs and dances as if some ancestral meaning, some instinctual knowledge recognized them and loved them."[15]

Transformed by the girls' initial Christmas performance, Sharp inaugurated a collaboration with Neal (and with MacIlwaine). For the two years following the Christmas gala, the three of them worked, in Neal's words, "in perfect harmony." In fact, though profound differences between Neal and Sharp ultimately severed their relationship, the two shared much in common. Both were children of the commercial elite: he was the son of a slate manufacturer, and she was the daughter of a button manufacturer; Sharp was a Fabian socialist, and Neal was a Christian socialist; and both developed a relationship, as many others of their background did, to theosophy—though Sharp more flirted with it, whereas Neal embraced it. Unfortunately, the two also shared a personal trait that strained their ability to work together: both were strong willed and sharp tongued.[16]

Their differences, which to a contemporary observer might seem small, finally undercut their ability to work together. To begin, the two had different temperaments and conflicting personal ambitions. Sharp, who disappointed his family by choosing a musical over a commercial career, was never happy with what he saw as his "modest" position. He came to see folk song and dance as allowing him to follow his musical passion but always worried that it did not afford him the status and livelihood he deserved. Driven to make his way and prove himself, he was continually in disputes with supervisors and those he saw as competitors. For instance, Sharp committed himself to the Folk-Song Society's growth but promptly found himself embroiled in a dispute with its other leaders. The society supported the board of education's new curriculum that mixed music-hall and other popular songs, and Sharp was appalled that the curriculum did not distinguish "pure folk songs."[17] Sharp's famous 1906 lecture at Queen's Hall emphasized the political stakes

he saw in the board's proposed folk song and dance curriculum, and Sharp actively led a successful fight to have the 1907 Education Act include fifty "pure" English songs and dances, "to refine and strengthen the national character. . . . The Introduction of English folk-songs into our schools will . . . arouse that love of country and pride of race, the absence of which we now deplore." As he explained, "Let [the board of education] introduce the genuine traditional song into the schools and I prophesy that within the year the slums of London and other large cities will be flooded with beautiful melodies, before which the rancorous, unlovely and vulgarizing music hall will flee as flees the night mist before the rays of the morning sun."[18]

Sharp's cantankerous nature and anxious personal strivings shaped both his career and personal relations, but when he combined them with the political and moral passion he invested in folk song and dance, he became a force to be reckoned with. His letters, which sometimes read like account books, are full of his social and financial anxieties and petty jealousies. At the same time, his ability to extract songs from countless village and backwoods women and men with whom he shared little but a passion for song demonstrates the mixture of charm, awe, and respect he clearly won.

We know less about Neal. Although she was enterprising and socially engaged, her political passion and critical edge seem to have been tempered by her theosophy and spiritualism. Pethick-Lawrence, in a sympathetic portrait, acknowledged her "unexpected remarks and criticisms" and observed that a "spice of malice in her speech" meant that "meals were never dull if she was at the table." Her friend added, however, that on balance, Neal—quite unlike Sharp—was "incapable of doing her worst enemy . . . a bad turn." Indeed, Neal's unpublished autobiography fairly gushes with theosophy and overheated poetic turns, and she reluctantly, if at all, strikes a discordant note. Unlike Sharp, the revival never seemed Neal's "career" as much as a vehicle for her feminist socialism. Indeed, Neal had developed another passion during these years—for suffrage—and that divided them as much as their views of folk dance, and their division over the former seemed to complicate any rapprochement over the latter.

Ironically, Neal discovered suffrage just as she was mobilizing on behalf of folk dance. She took the minutes at the inaugural meeting of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in 1906, and suffrage and socialism quickly became the twin pillars of her life's work, including how she thought of her Espérance girls and their dance. Her closest friends, the Pethick-Lawrences—their decision to hyphenate a shared last name reflecting their radical social politics—were the center of the suffragist movement. The WSPU was based

at their home, and they published *Votes for Women*, the militants' paper, for which Neal contributed occasional pieces. And although Mary Neal never was arrested in suffragette protests—possibly because arrest would have taken her from her social-work responsibility toward the settlement girls—she actively supported those who were, including Emmeline, who was imprisoned six times, and Evelyn Sharp, Cecil's sister, who was arrested twice.[19]

The historian Georgina Boyes concludes that suffrage was the one area of disagreement between Sharp and Neal that could not be bridged, a view that Neal came to share by the end of her life. Mary Neal regularly had the Espérance club perform at suffragette events. In contrast, Cecil Sharp, the self-described "conservative socialist," barely kept in touch with his sister Evelyn during her prison travails, and he blanched at the thought of working with folk dancers who were suffragists. As noted earlier, "Evie" was the one who reached out to him. When she was released from Holloway prison in August 1913, in one of the few letters they seem to have exchanged, she urged that they stop "quarreling" simply because they "differ on Woman Suffrage."[20]

Neal, noting in her autobiography that the beginning of the revival and the "militant suffrage movement" were coincident and that Sharp "violently opposed" the latter, concluded, "I am now [writing in 1935] convinced that the controversy between us [over suffrage] was, at the bottom, of a much deeper significance than I had any idea of then."[21] But, reflecting back, Neal struck a balanced and appreciative view of Sharp that seems to catch the many qualities of the man that made him both revered and difficult. He was, she wrote, "a curious mixture, as probably we all are, sometimes quite charming and helpful and then again very obstructive and unkind."[22] Unfortunately for Neal, she experienced both of Sharp's sides in the next few years.

In 1906–7, while Sharp fought with the board of education, he also worked collaboratively with Neal and MacIlwaine to establish English folk dance. At the same time, he was slowly allowing himself to begin to imagine making a career as an expert in folk song and dance. He had left the Conservatory of Music, most likely in 1905, and the diminishing appeal of the long commute and job at Ludgrove made the prospect of earning a living as what came to be called a "folklorist" more attractive. But there were no precedents, no established job trajectories, to such a career. Sharp's worries about his ability to provide "properly" for his family grew more shrill as time passed, and he came to see his career in folk dance as tied to his authority as "expert."

Still, during the next two years, Sharp, Neal, and MacIlwaine proceeded to work together equitably. In 1907, after the school board took notice of their work, Sharp and MacIlwaine coauthored *The Morris Book*, a history of mor-

ris dancing that included a description of eleven morris dances that could be taught in schools. Neal described in her memoir their working relationship in completing that book. Neal invited a group of "traditional dancers" to London to teach the girls and, in turn, teach others. Sharp notated the music while MacIlwaine provided the dance-step notations by copying the footwork of one of the Espérance girls, Florrie Warren. Warren, a poor girl from the East End who had been orphaned at a young age, had been taken under wing by Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence. Twenty years old in 1907, Warren was the leading Espérance dancer and was quickly emerging as the group's instructor as well.[23] The two men, fully acknowledging Warren's contribution in their introduction, dedicated the book to the Espérance Morris, the dance for which the club had gained renown. Neal's description of the challenges of the work was telling, for it foreshadowed a debate she and Sharp would engage about the complicated ability to ascribe authenticity to any rendition of the dance: "it is not easy to describe the actual steps and figures . . . for no two sides of dancers did a particular dance in precisely the same way. No two men in the side did the step in the same way, and no one danced it in exactly the same way on two separate occasions."[24] "Set to Music," a pamphlet Neal published in late summer 1907, expressed the promise they all felt in their joint project. Neal dedicated the volume to Cecil Sharp, who continued to recommend her to others and give introductory lectures to performances by the girls.[25]

Even as Sharp and Neal worked together, however, they began individual research projects. Both went into the countryside to collect new dances. Neal and Clive Carey, a young musician-scholar (he later became a distinguished opera baritone and director), collected new dances that she could teach her working girls. Carey had replaced MacIlwaine, who, though he pleaded poor health, had in fact resigned as musical director of the Espérance club because of the club's association with suffragette militancy. MacIlwaine and Neal remained friends, however, and upon his death, she adopted his son Anthony.[26] Meanwhile, Sharp uncovered eighteen traditional dances then being done in West Country villages, which he published in 1909 as *The Country Dance Book*. Completing the work for this volume, Sharp discovered, however, that he did not have to leave London to recover English country dance. Nellie Chaplin, a journalistic researcher, had recently uncovered the Playford volumes of historical country dances from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the British Library, and Sharp now turned his attention to them.

Playford aimed his collections of social country dances at the gentlemen of the Inns of Court and their ladies; they were for both sexes and were simple and very charming. Sharp mistakenly imagined the heterogeneous ori-

gins of these dances as "peasant," but to his credit, he recognized that 1651, when Playford began to publish, was a complicated transitional moment in the dances' history. Originally of the "village green, farmhouses and dancing booths of the annual fairs," he wrote, the country dances slowly invaded the "parlours and drawing-rooms of the wealthy" and were "subjected to an enervating influence which . . . ultimately led to its corruption."[27] According to Karpeles, Sharp recognized that the "conscious manipulations" by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century dancing masters of most of the dances Playford published, especially those that appeared in the latter volumes, meant they were "not pure folk dances." Still, he thought them beautiful and that they could be "said to rest on a traditional basis." So, enamored of their basic "gay simplicity," Sharp devised a notation system and transcribed the dances. In the five additional volumes of *The Country Dance Book* that he published between 1912 and 1922, Sharp described the way he imagined the figures to 158 Playford dances were done.[28] But in 1907, Sharp's transcriptions of the Playford manuscripts still lay in the future.

By the end of 1907, the potential for a folk dance movement was increasingly apparent to people such as Sharp and Neal. So, too, however, was the potential for conflict. As noted earlier, for Sharp the stakes were partially personal, as he increasingly saw that folk arts—both song and dance—held the promise of a career for him. But as important, both saw great moral and political import in the revival. In the grammar of the age, folklore collectors such as Neal and Sharp imagined English Country Dance as having a vital role to play in the revitalization of the "race."[29] As the *Daily Telegraph* reported a decade later, in 1917, "These old dances, with their quaint names, belong to an age that knew not the depravities of the turkey-trot, and the glide and the pseudo-tango."[30]

Against the "depravities" of the music hall and dance hall, both Neal and Sharp romanticized these "simple" folk. Neal imagined that folk song and dance resonated with her "unlettered" girls' "natural inheritance of the country folk"; Sharp saw folk song and dance as the English "race's" salvation from "coarse music hall songs" and the working-class sinfulness it symbolized. "Flood the streets . . . with folk tunes," wrote Sharp in 1907, and it will cleanse the thoroughfares of "those who now vulgarize themselves . . . and do incalculable good in civilizing the masses."[31]

Both Neal and Sharp embraced the "purity" of the "simple" folk, but they did so in fundamentally different, and in what they came to feel were irreconcilable, ways. Sharp, the Fabian socialist, claimed a paternalistic responsibility as "expert" to capture their simplicity and translate it to others. He

wanted the dances standardized for teaching in schools (with him overseeing the standard). Neal, the radical feminist socialist (and theosophist), assumed that the "uplifting" quality of the folk would emerge as an evolutionary process from the intrinsic, almost magical essence of the folk themselves. She believed that the essence of the dance was expressed in the bodies of her working girls and that a standard was neither possible nor appropriate. Thus, while both agreed on the "peasant" origins of the dance, they disagreed on how it was understood and conveyed—"taught"—to others.

The raised stakes of the inflated rhetoric only raised the temperature of disagreements, such as that which broke out with the appearance of a cartoon by Bernard Partridge in *Punch* in November 1907. Entitled "Merrie England Once More," the cartoon, which depicts three male and three female dancers led by Punch, accompanied a short paragraph about the dance revival and a notice for a conference to be held at a local gallery the next evening. Neal, delighted with the publicity, took it "straight to Mr. Sharp" and "saw a blind come down over his face." Sharp saw the invocation of "Merrie England" as precisely the saccharine view that the revival needed to correct. He could not abide by what he saw as the cartoon's ridicule and fundamental misunderstanding of the meaning and power in past traditions. It was, for him, the wrong sort of publicity, and the conference, he believed, was premature. Petulantly, Sharp announced that he was not going to the conference.

The conference was "well attended," and Sharp did appear, though clearly as a reluctant participant. The attendees initially agreed to form a permanent association "for the collecting and practicing of folk dances." According to Neal, Sharp advocated a "strict constitution" so that it "would be possible to control it [the association] in a way impossible with the simple constitution of the Folk Dance Society," with which Sharp was still embattled. Sharp's view was that the group should not be in the business of "collecting"; that needed to be done by "experts," presumably by people like him. So although the group met several more times, the only thing it could agree on was to disband. Neal got a few friends together and the next year started a "small association," the Association for the Revival and Practice of Folk Music, to move the movement outside the Espérance club. Neal demurred that the association would not be in the business of collecting folk music, because that was "being done so admirably by experts such as Cecil Sharp." Still, despite her effort to stay clear of his turf, she remembered Sharp as "bitterly attack[ing]" her from that day on.[32]

The feud between the two remained relatively muted for the next couple of years, staying out of the press until 1910. Meanwhile, each went about

"Merrie England Once More," *Punch*, November 1907, cover. Cartoon by Bernard Partridge. (Fales Library, New York University)

teaching folk dance and developing his or her own reputation in the field. In May 1909, the two even sat on the same panel to adjudicate a children's folk dance competition held in conjunction with the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford-on-Avon. But if Sharp remained polite in public, he bristled in private. He increasingly chose to distance himself from the Espérance girls' performances and in a March 7, 1909, letter to Neal made the breach formal, chastising her for incorporating stories he had told her about folk singers into her programs. Not to put too fine a point on their difference and the import—moral, financial, institutional, and authorial—it carried for him, he concluded, "So that it comes to this: if you wish to pose as an expert and authority you must not ask me to support you."[33]

Sharp had at this juncture already established himself as an authority on folk song; he had some way to go, however, to establish his bona fides in dance. He now expeditiously and with deliberation moved to do so. The board of education's official approval of morris dance as part of its revised 1909 school syllabus was just the opportunity he needed. The new syllabus

increased the demand for folk dance teachers and offered Sharp a new opportunity that would enhance his investment in developing a career in English folk dance. Neal, however, also rose to meet the challenge, writing publicly to the board in letters to the *Morning Post* and *Westminster Gazette* that teachers from her association were already instructing youth across the country.[34]

The Education Department's new syllabus gave cash value to the mantle of folk dance authority, which both Sharp and Neal rushed to claim. In public, both remained polite. In May 1909, Neal, MacIlwaine, Sharp, and Edward Burrows, inspector of schools for Portsmouth and West Sussex, sat together as judges at the Stratford Festival of Folk Song and Dance. But the politesse masked little. Increasingly vitriolic, bitter exchanges accompanied the publication of Sharp's *The Morris Book, Part II,* in August, and they quickly became, in public, as much enemies as opponents. The historian Roy Judge, in a splendid essay on Mary Neal, describes this exchange in detail. The trigger for the open conflict was Sharp's decision to rewrite the introduction to the first volume, which probably had been written by MacIlwaine. In Sharp's version, he pressed his own view of "authentic" morris dance style, a view that was a thinly veiled critique of Neal and the Espérance girls. In his rewrite, Sharp deleted a well-known reference in the first volume to the dance as more about vigor than grace, pointedly warning readers to avoid tendencies "to be over-strenuous." Then, adding insult to injury, he deleted all references to the Espérance girls (to whom the first volume had been dedicated) and to Florrie Warren, the demonstration dancer for the authors.[35]

Neal claimed to be content simply to disagree with Sharp's position about style, but she could not abide his dismissal of Warren. The bitter exchange between the two only clarified the depth of their disagreement and hostility. Neal wrote that she was "done with the farce of expecting fair play" and would from then on focus on the "interests" of the "movement at large" and her "Club in particular."[36] Sharp, in response, ignored her interest in the movement and alleged that her problem was that "from the beginning" she has only cared for her club. The greater problem, continued Sharp, was that Neal's club advanced a low artistic standard of the morris as "a graceless, undignified and uncouth dance quite unfitted for educational uses." Striking a note that probably unintentionally signaled the personal financial import that winning this struggle held for him, Sharp concluded that he was "not going to stand idly by any longer and allow [Neal] to make or mar the fortunes of the movement."[37]

By 1910, for both Sharp and Neal, the stakes were clear, the differences between them plain, the personal animosity manifest. And both moved

to consolidate their position. Neal had superior organizational talents and significant institutional bases in her association, her Espérance girls, and in her relationship with the Stratford-on-Avon Summer School for which the Espérance girls had performed. She also had the personal and social advantages of being a daughter of privilege. Sharp had a leading reputation in folk song, a professional standing in music as a teacher and scholar, and equal privileges of class. He had two other less tangible but no less important advantages, however: he was male and a "professional." Indeed, practitioners of Neal's vocation, social work, worried about their ability to win "professional" standing because of their putative lack of an "expert" specialized knowledge base. (It was another decade before the occupation began to claim casework and, after that, Freudian theory as bases.) Moreover, professionalism traditionally celebrated "objectivity," an attribute conventionally thought to be uniquely male, so to that extent, any claim by a woman such as Neal to professional expert standing was suspect. At a moment when reformers on both sides of the Atlantic—in both Edwardian England and Progressive Era America—celebrated the "expert," Sharp had the decided advantage. The furor surrounding the rising voices of militant suffragette women only strengthened traditional male bonds to Sharp's advantage.[38]

One key to success was to win the mantle of teacher-trainer, and as each side mobilized, two prominent men lined up behind Sharp. In July 1909, in the midst of the vitriolic exchange of letters between Sharp and Neal over the introduction to the second morris book, Burrows, who had previously worked with the two adversaries, appears to have become inclined toward Sharp. He arranged an advantageous meeting for Sharp with E. G. A. Holmes, the chief inspector for elementary school, two months *before* the board of education announced its new syllabus.[39] Sharp had already begun instructing teachers at the Chelsea College of Physical Education that March, but with the support of Holmes and following the publication of the new syllabus, the college established a School of Morris Dance in September 1909 with Sharp as director. Two sisters who attended the dance competition, Maud and Helen Karpeles, were "enchanted" by the dance and returned to London and joined Sharp's classes at the Chelsea school. By April 1910, the sisters and some of their friends had formed the Folk-Dance Club, rented the Portman Rooms in Baker Street, and organized performances of country dances, for which Sharp played the piano. Little is known about the composition of the audience of five hundred that the club attracted, but the address of the venue and the leading role of the affluent Karpeles sisters (their grandfather was a banker and their father was a merchant and stockbroker) suggests that those who attended

were well-heeled men and women of the emerging white-collar professional class or were from society. In any case, what is clear is that country dance had become an urban phenomenon and that Sharp had become its leader.[40]

However, by the spring of 1910, Mary Neal had also moved to train teachers. Neal had been bringing her girls to her "hostel" in Littlehampton for a decade and by 1909 had initiated a "vacation school" there for teaching folk dance. The school came to the attention of the Stratford-on-Avon governors, and at their request, she agreed to move the school there under her direction. As part of the arrangement, the governors invited Neal's newly formed Espérance Guild of Morris Dancers (formerly the Association for the Revival and Practice of Folk Music) to participate. The governors intended the school to be an annual event, but the question that almost immediately arose was who would run it: Cecil Sharp or Mary Neal?[41]

The public emergence of the Sharp-Neal feud in the *Morning Post* in the spring of 1910 over style and authority made the governors' choice one of more than personality. Sharp, as he had said earlier, argued that the dance should be only taught by experts, by "accredited teachers," who he presumably would train. Neal responded that the dance is "communal in origin," "from the heart of the unlettered folk," and "should also be left in the hands of the simple-minded and of those unlettered and ignorant of all technique." Debunking the need for the "expert," Neal averred that any "average person of intelligence" can teach a morris dance. She derided the debate with Sharp as simply the "age-long" difference "between the pedant and those in touch with actual life itself"—to which Sharp rejoined with a critique of the Espérance girls' own technique, complaining that they "were raising their thighs and legs up and down too violently."[42]

As the governors debated their choice, Neal fought back on what Sharp claimed as his own terrain: research. She published *The Espérance Morris Book,* her own authoritative volume on the dance. Then, accompanied by Clive Carey and others, she went to Headington and did her own research on Kimber's "authenticity." Addressing Sharp's critique of her Espérance team, on whether the free leg in the morris should be straight or bent, she discovered from her interviews with dancers that Kimber was himself a revival dancer. There was no one "proper" leg position, she announced—a view of the socially constructed character of the dance with which subsequently historians and folklorists have generally agreed (including Douglas Kennedy, a member of Sharp's original demonstration team who followed him as president of the dance society). In a letter to Archibald Flower, the Stratford director, Neal quipped bemusedly, "We have indubitably proved that the whole

basis of Mr. Sharp's contentions as *an expert* are entirely unfounded. . . . It is all extremely funny from one point of view, after the fuss he has made about expert knowledge."[43]

Sharp was not amused, and the role of the (male) expert was not so easily debunked in this era, especially by a woman. So whether her work was discounted as that of a woman amateur, and therefore inconclusive or irrelevant, is not known. She forwarded her "data" to Sharp and the governors but to no avail.[44]

With the governors' decision pending, an invitation to Mary Neal to visit the United States intervened. During the summer of 1909, Emily M. Burbank, a New York writer, arrived in London to lecture on the folk song and dance that she had just been studying in eastern Europe. Invited by Adeline Genee, a Danish-born ballerina and star of the London ballet, to a fundraising exhibition by the Espérance girls, Burbank felt compelled to invite Neal to visit the United States and demonstrate the morris.[45] Neal agreed on the condition that she could bring Florrie Warren to help her illustrate the dance, and in December 1910, the two set out for New York.

Apparently confident that her status at Stratford was secure, Neal traveled in part as an ambassador for the Stratford program. She was still advertised as the presiding instructor and took many announcements of the vacation school with her to try to drum up business from Americans. However, when she returned from America in the early spring of 1911, she discovered that she had lost whatever advantages she had had with the Stratford governors.

Sharp had not been idle during Neal's absence, although personal setbacks had left him increasingly discouraged. Determined to make a living as a folklorist, after eighteen years, he had finally resigned his post at Ludgrove. But his eldest daughter, Dorothea, was seriously ill; his own asthma was worsening; the commute to work was debilitating; and he had too little money. Prospects in England seemed dismal, and he talked of emigrating to Australia, where he had first developed his music career after university. But during Neal's absence, Sharp's fortunes changed. While Neal made her mark in New York and Boston, the governors of the Shakespeare festival, although acknowledging that Neal had better organizational skills, chose Sharp, as the "authority," to direct future Stratford summer schools. Male bonds and paternalism would have merely cemented the draw of the cult of expertise that Sharp cultivated and represented, and Sharp's privileged entrée to the two men who were key to the teaching program, Edward Burrows and E. G. A. Holmes, undoubtedly helped his cause.[46] For otherwise, Sharp and Neal were both well connected; it was just that for the purposes of song and dance, Sharp's connections were

more relevant. Neal's ties were more to the bohemian and radical Left—and to the controversial suffragettes; Sharp's personal coterie was the musical and intellectual elite of North London. His friends and associates, for example, comprised a roster of the leading British composers of the day: as early as 1907, he provided English folk tunes that Gustav Holst used in his *Somerset Rhapsody*, an orchestral piece dedicated to Sharp; Vaughan Williams, who also used folk tunes in his compositions, was a close friend and devotee of the dance movement; and George Butterworth, the young composer, was one of the original members of Sharp's demonstration side.[47]

Soon after the governors' decision was made public, Sharp's personal life also took a turn for the better. In May 1911, the family moved to Uxbridge, where the country air improved his daughter's health and his asthma. In July, the government awarded him a civil list pension of one hundred pounds in recognition of his pathbreaking work collecting and preserving English folk song. He also found himself with a growing and profitable schedule of lectures and performances of morris, jigs, and country dances, most notably at the Crystal Palace, and he illustrated the dances with performances by his Chelsea students.[48]

When the summer school resumed at Stratford-on-Avon for four weeks in August 1911, Sharp was at its head, as he was for the rest of the decade. Neal resigned as honorary secretary of the Festival Association, and Sharp substituted his own program for her 1911 school syllabus. The Stratford position gave Sharp an important base for training a coterie of teachers who remained indebted and devoted to him. But as important, the venue introduced Sharp (and members of his demonstration team) to influential American student-visitors and transatlantic possibilities for both the revival movement and his career. In his diary, Sharp recalls that "Miss Hall and Miss Lauman, women who do the Dalcroze [*sic*] stuff at the Francis Parker School," attended the 1912 session. Harvard's George Baker attended the same year, and 1913 brought Helen Storrow and Mary Wood Hinman to the summer school.[49]

Neal did not retire quietly from the dance scene upon her return from the States. She remained active in folk dance until the war, though she remained highly involved with the suffrage campaign as well. She published two volumes on morris dance in 1910 and 1912, *The Espérance Morris Book*, and three years later, with Frank Kidson (1855–1926), another accomplished folk song collector, published *English Folk-Song and Dance* (1915). Vestiges of the acrimony between Sharp and Neal accompanied the books and filtered into the reviews: the reviewer for the *Musical Times*, for instance, dismissed Neal's contribution on dance in the 1915 volume as "an object lesson in uncriti-

cal method [that] is difficult to take seriously." The reviewer acknowledged, however, Neal's critique (which the reviewer rejected) of those who distort folk dance by "obsessing" with "technical knowledge [and] academic restrictions." Of course, no reader needed to be told who "those" were.[50]

Neal continued to direct the Espérance Guild in performances until the war. By 1913, she was back at Littlehampton running her own vacation school at the Green Lady Hotel with the help of Clive Carey and the Espérance Girls' Club dancers. Two school activities merit particular mention: even as she debunked Sharp as the academic pedant, and in turn was dismissed as not scholarly herself, Neal lectured on the history of folk dance and the revival based on her research in the British Library; and on another occasion, Grace Cleveland Porter, an American "authority on negro songs," gave a lecture on "old negro plantation stories and 'spiritual'" accompanied by a demonstration of "negro folk singing games . . . by the Espérance Guild of Morris Dancers."[51]

Little is known of the success or fate of the Littlehampton school, although a 1913 account notes that there were "many teachers" in attendance. With the coming of the war, and the clear ascendance of Sharp, Neal disappeared from the folk scene by the end of 1914. Sharp made a gesture to Neal in 1921, inviting her to a folk dance festival. She was "unable" to attend, and they reportedly exchanged cordial notes. In 1937, Mary Neal was appointed Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for her role in folk song and dance collecting. It was a long-overdue and bittersweet award. Still, reading Neal's memoir suggests that any formal politeness in her exchanges with Sharp masked a legacy of sorrow, if not anger.[52] The English Folk Dance Society eventually awarded her a gold badge for her role in the movement, but toward the end of her life she reportedly walked into the EFDSS headquarters and returned it to them, saying in effect, "Thank you very much. I've enjoyed having this, but I think it really belongs here."[53]

Sharp Consolidates His Position

By the end of 1911, Sharp had also moved to solidify his organizational base. With Sharp taking the initiative, on December 6, the English Folk Dance Society (EFDS) formed. (It united with the Folk-Song Society to form EFDSS in 1932.) Sharp was made honorary director at the meeting and later became the society's first director. His desire for a prestigious figure as president was filled when Lady Mary Trefusis, the eldest daughter of the sixth Earl Beauchamp and Woman of the Bedchamber to Queen Mary, agreed in 1913

to serve. Lady Trefusis, whom Sharp's biographer describes as herself a "first-rate player of the dances," was an important bridge to society and a source of capital for EFDSS in years to come.[54]

Under Sharp's leadership, EFDS quickly established the first of its branches—in Liverpool, Oxford, and Cirencester—where former supporters of Mary Neal were realigning with Sharp.[55] With Sharp now in control of both Stratford and the new society, one of EFDS's first activities was to organize a 1911 Christmas Vacation School at Stratford-on-Avon. According to Karpeles, eighty students attended, "of which a good many were men" who did jigs and sword dancing, but there continued to be no men's morris, as men were still struggling to learn in the beginner's class. Interestingly, a non-white international researcher for whom the English were a quaint "other" was distinguished for his dancing as much as for his race: "Among them was a very interesting Japanese scholar, who did everything with the greatest facility and was very much envied by the other men."[56]

Sharp's men's morris side became his exhibition team, and the men were paired with his women dancers to demonstrate couple country dances. Two of the men came from the Chelsea Polytechnic: A. Claud Wright and A. J. Paterson. The others were part of Sharp's intellectual-musical world: Douglas Kennedy, who upon Sharp's death became EFDSS director; the writer Perceval Lucas, who went on to edit the first volumes of the *Journal of the English Folk Dance Society*; the professional musician George Wilkinson, who succeeded Sharp at Ludgrove; and the brilliant young composer George Butterworth. The Oxford literary scholar Reginald Tiddy was the "spare" dancer. The women included Marjory Sinclair, Olive Lett, Maggie Muller, Helen Kennedy (Douglas's sister), and the two Karpeles sisters, Maud and Helen.[57]

On February 22, 1912, EFDS hosted its first "at home" for "a large number of influential people," at which the men's morris team made its debut. Soon after, it and the women teams were out and about the country demonstrating morris dance nearly every weekend. Women dancers included a young Scarborough teacher trained by Sharp, Lily Conant, who came to assume a major role in the history of ECD in the United States, and the two Karpeles sisters, among others.[58]

In the next few years, Sharp and his demonstration dancers began to establish an international reputation. In June 1913, they performed the Playford dance "Black Nag" in Paris, and the next summer they danced the "Old Mole," another Playford classic, in Brussels before a "large and fashionable audience" attending a fashion show. Among the many performances, however, it was a Savoy Theatre performance on December 2, 1912, that helped

propel Sharp to the United States. The avant-garde director Granville Barker lent EFDS the use of the theater for a matinee (he was staging Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* then), and the sold-out performance excited Barker's interest in incorporating country dance into one of his plays. Soon after, Barker staged *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and asked Sharp to arrange music and dance for the production. The fairies danced two country dances—"Sprig of Thyme" and "Sellenger's Round"—and Barker invited Sharp to repeat his work for the New York production to follow.[59]

By the time Sharp prepared to debark for the United States in December 1914, he had consolidated his hold on the English folk dance movement. EFDS had blossomed; it had grown to nearly five hundred members spread over twenty-one regional branches. Sharp had cemented his role as the English folk dance authority as well and had institutionalized it with a certificate program whereby he taught, evaluated, and then "certified" dance proficiency in formal examinations. By 1914, Sharp had awarded 169 certificates. Each certified the "authenticity" of the English country dancer and served as an active representation of Sharp's authority in English Country Dance.[60]

Conclusion

For the English folk revivalists and their American visitors, the revival was as much a project for the renovation of the revivalists themselves as for their immigrant subjects, either in the settlement houses and playgrounds or in the "depravities" of the music halls of the city. Of course, the immigrant and working-class girls and boys who were taught (and, at times, assigned) to learn the dances in the schools and playgrounds were quite different from adults such as Sharp, Neal, and their friends, who chose to do it recreationally and as a social mission. The experience of Florence Warren was an exception, not the rule. The men and women who started, led, and joined EFDS and its soon-to-be-organized American branch were as a rule cut from different class and ethnic cloth than the settlement youth. They were white, Protestant elites of Anglo-American or northern European background who identified with ECD and Anglo-American culture as the core of national identity. All the major protagonists in this story—notably, Neal, Sharp, and Wright in England and Burchenal, Storrow, Baker, and Hinman in the United States—shared an elite or affluent middle-class Anglo-Saxon social identity. A notable exception was the Karpeles sisters, who were of German-Jewish descent. They, too, however, were thoroughly Anglophile, and in their letters and writing never represented themselves as other than English. Maud, for

example, was baptized into the Anglican Church at the age of fifty-three, and she had converted to Christianity at the age of fourteen.[61]

Sharp's determinate role in dictating the spirit of the dance, however, was advanced by a tight coterie of supporters with whom he surrounded himself. The English leaders were a close-knit social "family" devoted to its patriarch. The Kennedys and Karpeles were at the center of this group of devotees. Helen Karpeles, who became the society's secretary, married Kennedy, and her sister, Maud, became Sharp's confidant, travel companion, collaborator, and personal secretary. In the context of the heated debate within the movement, it was only a matter of time before one wag would uncharitably dub the group the "Sharpeles."

The ascendance of Sharp and disappearance of Neal, however, had consequences for the character of English Country Dance as it emerged on both sides of the Atlantic. Both could agree on the central missionary project of the folk revival that Neal had described in 1910: "This revival of our English folk music is . . . part of a great national revival, a going back from the town to the country, a reaction against all that is demoralizing in city life. It is a re-awakening of that part of our nation's consciousness which makes for the wholeness, saneness and healthy merriment."[62] Accordingly, both could also accept the doctoring (what was, in fact, censoring) of dances to remove elements they thought unseemly—whether it be to delete a kiss (really more a peck) from a folk dance, as Neal had suggested (and Sharp enacted), or to change a dance title, as Sharp had done in retitling "Cuckolds All A Row" as "Hey, Boys, Up Go We."

Neal and Sharp also had significant class- and gender-inflected differences that had a bearing on the history of the dance movement, most especially in the style and spirit of the dance. In both cases, Sharp proceeded as the dance patriarch. Karpeles, Sharp's devoted helpmate, even as she blurs the line between hagiography and biography, acknowledges that he was "dogmatic" and that his polemics "were often vehement and were occasionally enlivened with a kind of schoolboyish invective."[63] In truth, Neal's and Sharp's class backgrounds were not very different, but their class politics were, and Neal's departure from the movement had profound implications for the spirit—the style—of the country dance over the next quarter century. Rather than a movement rooted in the working class and led by a militant socialist suffragette, under Sharp's leadership EFDS expressed the more restrained and elite bodies of the bourgeoisie who put the dances of village folk, both literally and figuratively, into more formal attire. Ironically, although Sharp recognized the deterioration of Playford as it moved into the drawing rooms, he enacted

the same process. He might learn a dance or song from a gardener such as John England—or later from a backwoods highlander in the United States—but he would return to the city, put on his black tie and starched shirt, and "dress up" the dance or song for urban bourgeois consumption or for the remaking of the urban proletariat. Ostensibly, the conflict between Neal and Sharp was over the proper character of the dance—"authenticity"—and their different positions on authenticity mirrored the ambivalence and contradictions in their views as a "conservative socialist" and radical socialist-suffragist, respectively. They divided on how much they identified with the working class, but together they located a politics of the folk on a progressive-socialist continuum.

But there were larger personal and political differences that also divided the two. In retrospect, the *Punch* cartoon and 1907 conference triggered Sharp's anxieties about any challenge to his authorial role. Basically, Sharp assumed one of the hallmarks of Progressive reform, the role of the expert, but he did so as the Folk-Song Society patriarch. Neal essentialized the working-class authenticity of her seamstresses, believing they expressed the natural enthusiasm of the dance. Sharp complained that the Espérance girls, with their "violent" leg movements, ignored the historical form that he thought the dance teacher—an expert such as himself—had to teach. Neal's views conformed to her militant suffragist and active socialist engagements. Sharp's Fabian socialism was a more restrained and elite stripe. Never comfortable with competition, Sharp seemed to tolerate it least from strong women who were suffragettes. Folk dance attracted women dance teachers, of course, and Sharp did surround himself with women. But Sharp's women teachers were cut from a different cloth than Neal—they were not suffragettes, to be sure, but more to the point, as Sharp assumed control of the new folk dance movement, they accepted him as the ECD authority and were devoted to him.[64]

Sharp's assumption of the ECD throne in England did not necessarily translate into authority in the United States, however. For that, he had to wage additional struggles. And in the United States, his hegemony came ultimately to rely on his reservoir of young female teachers, acolytes, and devotees.