

Elgar's 'enigma' and its solution

Elgar's *Variations on an Original Theme*, also known as *Enigma Variations* form a brilliant orchestral work. The piece, composed 1898/'99 has always had a special fascination because of the 'enigma' that haunts the piece. The original theme is headed 'enigma', the variations 'describe' fourteen individuals from the composer's circle of friends, including his wife and himself. They were friends of Elgar, not necessarily of each other. These 'variationees' are identified by nicknames or initials. Sometimes 'their' variation features an instrument they played (viola, cello) or their style of playing (for instance timpani imitating the rough treatment of a piano). It is well known that the IXth variation is inspired by Beethoven's adagio's and that Mendelssohn's *Meeresstille* is quoted in the XIIIth variation, suggesting a sea voyage.

The 'enigma' soon became an extra-proportional 'problem'. The composer *never* gave the secret away, which led to the wildest speculations, associations and conclusions, to books, articles, radio- and TV-programs, pre-concert talks, and sometimes to mathematical or psychological theories, in some cases upheld by ludicrously shaky anagrams, cipherings, etc.. It has even been suggested that - when asked - Elgar 'lied' denying *Auld Lang Syne* was the 'solution'. Many ways lead to Rome, but innumerable ways don't lead to Rome what so ever!^[1] In reality, the puzzle was rather simple, and could be cracked with just the printed score and the original program note, and knowing something about British history and music..

Edward Elgar (1857-1934) was a monarchist, conservative, and patriot, as speaks from many of his works, such as the *Imperial March* (op. 32, 1897) for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee year, the *The Banner of Saint George* ballad (op. 33, 1897), the cantata *Caractacus* (op. 35, 1898), the first *Pomp and Circumstance March* (as *Land of Hope and Glory*, op. 39/1; op. 44/7, and separate arr. thereof, 1901/'02), *Cockaigne / In London Town* (op. 40, 1902), the *Coronation Ode* (op. 44, 1902), *The Crown of India* (op. 66, 1912), and his WW I music. The highlight years of the composer's career (ca. 1890 – ca.1919) paralleled with the three decades of Britain's imperialistic climax.^[2]

The doggerel lyrics (by a Shapcott Wensley), of *The Banner of St George* for chorus and orchestra, premiered 18 May 1897 in London (another work for Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee), were intrepidly patriotic rather than poetic:

*It comes from misty ages,
The banner of England's might
The blood red cross of the brave St George
That burns on a field of white!
It speaks of the deathless heroes,
On fames bright page inscrolled
And bids great England ne'er forget
The glorious deeds of old!*

Caractacus, also at times carped for its libretto, is a lengthy heroic cantata in praise of the first century King of the Britons fighting Roman rule. It was dedicated to Queen Victoria and first performed on 5 October 1898. *Caractacus* surely expressed the British endeavor never to be slaves.

It was February 1899 when Elgar composed a part song for Queen Victoria, setting a poem by the famous early psycho-analyst W.F.M. Myers, *To Her Beneath Whose Steadfast Star*.

It was first performed on Victoria's 80th birthday, 24 May 1899:

*To her beneath whose steadfast star
From pole to pole in lusty play
Her English wander, forcing far
Their world-ingathering way; -
Outsoar the Caesar's eagle flight,
Outrun the Macedonian reign,
Flash from the flamy Northern night
Speech to the Austral main: -
To her whose patient eyes have seen
Man's knowledge wax thro' ebb and flow,
Till some have felt those bars between
Wind of the Spirit blow; -
Tho' some, heart-worn with doubt and strife,
Would bid the doomful thunder fall,
Bind as with bands the cosmic Life,
And dream the end of all: -
Beyond, beyond their wisdom's bound,
Thro' fairer realms the Queen shall roam,
Till soul with soul the Wife hath found
Her mystic-wedded home: -
While her long-rumoured glories stir
The blue tide's earth-engirdling wave,
With love, with life, her Prince and her
The All-Father shield and save!
Let the Queen live for ever!*

A few weeks after this Windsor premiere, involving 250 singers conducted by Elgar, a larger work was presented to the world on 19 June 1899: the *Variations on an Original Theme*, op. 36. The composer began working on it on October 21, 1898, after a long day of music teaching, only two weeks after the premiere of *Caractacus*. How were circumstances within the British Empire when Elgar worked on *Caractacus* op. 35, and the *Variations on an Original Theme* op. 36? During the first six months of 1898 Elgar worked on *Caractacus*, starting in January and completing its composition on 12 June, and its orchestration on 21 August. Not a single note was changed after 29 August and the premiere took place on 5 October 1898.

1898 was not quite a time of peace and quiet for the Kingdom and the Empire. It was however a very good year for imperialism. The Americans toppled the Spanish from their colonies in the Caribbean and the Philippines, and a few months later the British crushed the Mahdist regime in the Sudan. These two examples of 'regime change' had more in common than just the year they occurred. Both were very popular wars among the publics of their own countries, not least because they were seen as defeating corrupt and outmoded regimes standing in the way of progress and the betterment of their populations. Moreover they were very successful militarily. The British armed forces achieved rapid total-victory over their foeman. Apart from the Sudan other events in Africa, notably Transvaal, caused great anxiety in Britain. For years rock-solid patriot Elgar, the 'imperial bard'^[3], had a deeply rooted respect for General George Gordon, 'Gordon of Khartoum' (1833-1885). Gordon had had a brilliant career as a military hero and as an administrator in large parts of the colonial world (Crimea, China, Asia Minor, [East-] Africa). In 1884 he became a very popular

national hero with the British public holding Khartoum in Sudan for eleven months when besieged by a self-appointed Mahdi, Muhammed Ahmad, during the 'Mahdi War'. Just two days before British troops could come to the rescue Gordon was killed (26 January 1885). News of his death led to an 'unprecedented wave of public grief' across Britain. The grievance extended from Queen Victoria to Gordon Boys Clubs, springing up all over the country. Gordon books and poetry poured from the printers. Gordon Statues would be erected in Trafalgar Square, St. Paul's Cathedral (mausoleum), Victoria Embankment, Westminster Abbey (bust), London, in Chatham, Gravesend, Southampton, Melbourne and Khartoum.

With Major General Charles George Gordon C.B. Britain lost a son:

Who at all time and everywhere, gave his strength to the weak, his substance to the poor, his sympathy to the suffering, his heart to God. [...] He saved an Empire by his warlike genius. He ruled vast Provinces with justice, wisdom, and power. And lastly obedient to his Sovereign's command, he died in the heroic attempt to save men, women and children from imminent and deadly peril. [...] (Memorial plaque, Gordon's mausoleum, St. Pauls)

For the above reasons Elgar was most impressed by Gordon. A present the young married couple Elgar-Roberts received on their wedding (May 1889) was a copy of Cardinal Newman's poem *The Dream of Gerontius* with underlinings and markings Gordon made in Khartoum in his copy of the work, not long before his death in 1885. Since October 1898 (in fact since the very same days the creative process of the *Enigma Variations* began), and stimulated by A.J. Jaeger and his wife Alice, Elgar time and time again planned to dedicate a program symphony to the national hero, a Gordonian 'Eroica'. It resulted in originally Gordon-inspired ideas and fragments residing in works such as *The Dream of Gerontius*, the *Second Symphony* and well possibly in other orchestral pieces.

Two reports about the savagery and barbarism of the Mahdists received wide publicity in Britain in the mid-1890's and influenced public opinion in favor of military intervention. Fourteen years after General Gordon's death, in September 1898, Britain was again swept by a storm of patriotic emotions. The Mahdist War or Sudan Campaign (1881-1899) was as good as brought to an end after the Battle of Atbara (April 1898) and by the crucial Anglo-Egyptian Victory of Omdurman (2 September 1898).

Egypt at the time was a puppet monarchy within the British Empire. General Lord Herbert Kitchener was in charge of the victorious British-Egyptian armies, equipped with the latest in modern weapons, including the highly effective Maxim machine guns. A year after Omdurman the battle of Umm Diwaykarat ended the Mahdi War, when what was still left of the Mahdi army was slain by Kitchener. Sudan became an Egyptian-British condominium.

The importance of the British victory at Omdurman cannot be overestimated. Its fame equals such historic battles as Austerlitz, Waterloo, Alamein, and Stalingrad. It was celebrated at home like no victory ever before. The famous 'Lord' George Sanger's circus mounted a spectacular show with a thousand men and horses to depict 'Kitchener's Glorious Victory over the Savage Forces...'. At Crystal Palace Brock's firework display ('Brock's benefits') had 'Fire portraits of Gordon and the Sirdar (Lord Kitchener)... with the word "Avenged" underneath', and a newspaper noted that 'so long as the fiery picture was visible the cheers of the spectators continued'. The following year there was a complete 'pyrodrama' entitled 'The Battle of Omdurman'. The most passionate emotions were manifested in music halls, where the

war theme was ubiquitous for some weeks. Throughout September of 1898 no variety program was complete without a reference to Omdurman. At the Middlesex Music Hall as late as December the songs still referred to the Sudan victory and, as one observer noted, 'what was noticeable was the intense patriotism of each Artiste'.^[4] Apart from Omdurman another equally important political incident stirred Britain in 1898, when the Mahdi War was still going on (albeit it that its outcome was clear). The Fashoda Crisis or Fashoda Incident involved France, an old enemy Britain had been at war with over twenty times since the Thirteenth Century.

The Fashoda Crisis was the result of ongoing and complicated territorial disputes ('the scramble for Africa') between Britain and France since an incident involving the Suez Canal in 1869-1875.

In 1898 the British wanted to secure East Africa to safeguard the Suez Canal, while the French wanted to expand eastward past the Congo and up the Nile. The French sought local support to remove Britain from Egypt (which they had controlled since the 1880's). Foreign Secretary Edward Grey warned France that any further action would be seen as an 'unfriendly act'.

On 10 July 1898 the French sent a force led by Captain Marchand to Fashoda (8 Frenchmen, 120 Senegalese men and arms for 3,000 in total). They put up a little fortress and negotiated a treaty with the local chief to ensure they could stay relatively peacefully. However, Kitchener and his army, returning from Omdurman in September went to Fashoda and forced Marchand to leave. The incident inflamed the imperial pride of both nations. Widespread popular outrage followed, each side accusing the other of expansionism and aggression. The crisis continued throughout September and October 1898, and both nations began to mobilize their fleets in preparation for war. In naval terms, the confrontation was heavily in the United Kingdom's favour, a circumstance the French acknowledged in the aftermath of the crisis. Though the French force was larger, the British had them outgunned. There was little the French could do against Britain without efficient naval support. Thus the 1898 Fashoda Crisis became the climax of imperial territorial disputes between Britain and France in Eastern Africa. The British held firm when Britain and France were on the verge of war. The French government quietly ordered its soldiers to withdraw on 4 November 1898. What could have turned into a bloody colonial war ended in a diplomatic victory for the British. The Fashoda Crisis was the last serious colonial dispute between both Empires, and its classic diplomatic solution is considered to be the precursor of the *Entente Cordiale* (1904).

In the early days of November 1898 the Omdurman celebrations were still continuing in Britain, while the Fashoda Crisis was still going on in Sudan. Even another political problem played up in the Empire, the developing turmoil in South-Africa since gold had been discovered at Witwatersrand, Transvaal, in 1886. In subsequent years many, mostly British, gold diggers ('Uitlanders') tried their luck there. A difficult and persistent conflict situation grew from it, particularly confronting the English and the Boers. Transvaal offered huge financial opportunities. There were more Uitlanders, foreigners, poorly treated but mostly digging for gold, than there were Boers. The Boers disliked the prospectors but needed the heavy taxes the Uitlanders paid. The British Governor of the Cape, Alfred Milner demanded to know how the Boers and British could keep the peace, while the British Uitlanders in Transvaal were treated so badly. Considering this Milner became convinced that unless there was a direct confrontation the British would lose South Africa. Milner, as the British plenipotentiary was manoeuvring hard to create an armed conflict at the

expense of the Afrikaans residents of Transvaal. He went to London and on 22 November 1898 underpinned his views explaining the situation to the colonial secretary, Joseph Chamberlain. There was a false hope that the moderates, especially the Dutch in the Orange Free State, would be able to convince their foreman Kruger that militarily they could not defeat the British. Eventually, after a useless peace conference at Bloemfontein in June 1899, the Second Boer War broke out in the autumn of 1899. And there was even more to excite war fever in 1898, in Britain as well as elsewhere. Her Majesty's army in India was contemplating a push into Afghanistan, in the endless conflict with Russia over Central Asia and India's borderlines. Striving for influence and trade in China, the British outwitted other European powers, Japan and the USA, by the 99-year lease on Hong Kong, as of 1 July 1898.

Looking back in 1906 the new Liberal Foreign Secretary of the world's greatest power, Edward Grey, with some irony, told President Theodore Roosevelt:

‘Before the Boer War (1899–1902), we were spoiling for a fight. We were ready to fight France about Siam, Germany about the Kruger telegram^[5], and Russia about anything. Any government here, during the last ten years of the last century, could have had war by lifting a finger. The people would have shouted for it. They had a craving for excitement and a rush of blood to the head.’^[6]

When the sentiments of war and patriotic emotions for the Empire stirred Britain between the Jubilee year 1897 and the prologue of another South-African bloodletting, back at home, in his house ‘Forli’, Malvern Link, Worcestershire, Elgar wrote *The Banner of St George, Caractacus* and the *Variations on an Original Theme ‘Enigma’*.

When working on *Caractacus*, he wrote (17 March 1898) to Joseph Bennett^[7]:

‘I hope some day to do a great work – a sort of national thing that my fellow Englishmen might take to themselves and love – not a too modest ambition! [...]’ The libretto of *Caractacus* was so jingoistic that Elgar’s friend, A.J. Jaeger, music editor and artistic advisor at Novello’s, Elgar’s music publisher, commented on it. Elgar replied (12 July 1898):

‘I knew you would laugh at my librettist patriotism (and mine) – never mind: England for the English is all I say – hands off! There’s nothing apologetic about me.’

Elgar began writing his theme and variations for orchestra in October 1898, when The Omdurman Victory was still widely glorified, the Foshoda Crisis was hot, and the kernels of the Second Boer War (1899-1902) were germinating.

For his new work Elgar selected friends and acquaintances and their idiosyncrasies, and sketched them in a set of fourteen orchestral variations. The principal idea was not unlike Schumann’s *Carnival* or Mussorgsky’s *Pictures at an Exhibition*. The score was dedicated ‘to my friends pictured within’. He headed the variations with initials and nicknames of his friends and much later published some information about them, when the Aeolian Company produced piano player rolls of the piece.

It is important to realize, that the *whole* score was dedicated to Elgar’s *friends pictured within*. The original theme was called *Enigma*. Who could be ‘pictured within’? The ‘variationees’ were identified. Not the Enigma. Many tried to ‘crack’ Elgar’s puzzle, overlooking the actual enigma and its identity. Musical ‘solutions’ were brought forward and published from such an outlandish nature as Beethoven’s *Sonata pathétique*, *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*, *Auld Lang Syne*, *Pop Goes the Weasel*, and *Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*. Because, there had to be a tune. Or not?

This is what Elgar actually revealed himself:

‘It is true that I have sketched for their amusement and mine, the idiosyncrasies of fourteen of my friends, not necessarily musicians; but this is a personal matter, and need not have been mentioned publicly. The Variations should stand simply as a ‘piece’ of music. The Enigma I will not explain – it’s ‘dark saying’ must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the connexion between the Variations and the Theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and larger theme ‘goes’, but is not played... So the principal Theme never appears, even as in some later dramas – e.g., Maeterlinck’s *L’Intruse* and *Les sept Princesses*^[8] – the chief character is never on the stage.’

With this elucidation Elgar caused an enormous confusion. Would there be a non-played counterpoint melody? Then again, which composer would use a non-played tune? This whole idea has been a miss-interpretation since the variations’ premiere. The counterpoint-theory is all but nonsensical. Elgar was not an academic ‘Kontrapunktist’ such as Bruckner or his contemporary Max Reger. Any clever musician (such as Dmitry Shostakovich, Bernard Drukker or Hugo van Neck) can produce any counterpoint to any tune, at any time. This is a matter of talent and musicianship, not of enigmas. In Elgar’s notes the word ‘never’ turned out important. So what *is* the enigma about? Late in Elgar’s life the idea occurred to create a ballet around the variations and the dedicatees. Elgar never disclosed his secret but talking to his friend Troyte he made a slip of the tongue. If there were to be a ballet ‘a veiled dancer’ should represent the original theme. This implies that there is someone *in* the enigma. Moreover, it is probably a woman. This is suggested by the mentioned ‘veiled dancer’ and by the ‘feminine’ orchestration of the theme. The idea of a person ‘pictured within’ the enigma is not new in itself. Shortly after the Variations’ premiere Rosa Burley, the Malvern school teacher and friend of Elgar’s for many years, was at a Worcester party. She was approached by somebody saying:

‘Well Miss Burley, I’m a variation, are you?’

‘I’m not a variation; I’m the theme.’

She told Elgar about this, who was ‘much amused’.^[9] Rosa Burley was not the enigma. Far from it. The enigma was somebody everybody could have guessed, and that’s what Elgar expected. He thought the puzzle would be cracked at the premiere of the Variations, on 24 June 1899. But nobody solved it, which must have surprised or disappointed Elgar. Five months after the premiere, and almost two months after the first performance of the revised, extended version, Elgar wrote to Jaeger on Guy Fawkes Day 1899:

‘It’s no good trying any patriotic caper on in England: we applaud the “sentiment” in other nations but repress it sternly in ourselves: anything like “show” is repugnant to the real English [...].’^[10]

Troyte Griffith once asked Elgar if *God save the King* was the solution. He said: ‘Of course not, but it is so well known...’

Nobody guessed it. The truth appears to be this. Elgar liked ‘japes’, puzzles, enigmas, crosswords, anything like that. The ‘friend’ he pictured in his ‘enigma’ was Britannia ‘sitting by desolate streams... for ever it seems’ (Enigma theme quoted in *The Music Makers*, 1908).

The ‘larger theme’ that ‘goes’ but is *not* played, is a sentiment: patriotism, it is the *feeling* of *Rule Britannia!* The English Thesaurus has many more different interpretations of the word ‘theme’ than explications in for instance Stainer & Bell’s 1899 Dictionary of Musical Terms. Collins 1985 Thesaurus offers nineteen meanings

for this every-day word. In fact using the word ‘theme’ Elgar purposely confused and disoriented anyone approaching the enigma, although he made explicitly clear that the ‘larger theme’ going ‘over’ the set is *not* played.

Although most likely counterpoint has nothing to do with it, there was a musical element in the Enigma. Elgar’s daughter Carice Elgar Blake wrote to Mrs. Richard Powell (‘Dorabella’, Dora Penny, Var. X: Intermezzo) on 28 June 1942: ‘We know that there was a tune.’

Mrs. Powell discussed the enigma numerous times with the composer, but he never gave her the truth. She would ask him and she once felt:

‘...that he was on the point of telling me what it was, and then he just said: “I shan’t tell you. You must find it out for yourself.”’^[11]

But Dorabella got close, reading Elgar’s program note again, 47 years after the premiere:

‘It will be seen that Elgar carefully divides his mystery into two parts. The first part concerns his Original Theme, and on this he refuses comment. In the comparison that he makes at the end of the program note, he further indicates that the two mysteries are, in fact, closely related.’^[12]

The relation is this: Britannia is the friend pictured within ‘Enigma’, and the ‘never, never’ falling thirds from the *Rule Britannia!* chorus are the nucleus of the ‘Original Theme’, and therefore of the whole work.

What’s in a name? Elgar once said to Dora Penny: ‘You of all people’ should have guessed.’ She never understood this remark. It is easily explained by looking at a Victorian penny coin. There is Britannia, ruling the waves. There is even a clipper in the distance, reminiscent of Mendelssohn’s *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*, quoted in Variation XIII: ***.

Another famous symbol for England, John Bull – with bulldog an’ all!– is pictured within the

XIth variation. Elgar described the ‘variationee’, Dr. G.R. Sinclair with his bulldog Dan, as ‘organist of Hereford Cathedral’. In the 16th century for some years that very church had a – very famous – organist, the illustrious composer John Bull (1562-1628)^[13].

The ‘Britannia theory’ was developed after hearing the Variations played during the 1973/74 concert season. Its quintessence was published in an interview in the Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* on 30 December 1975. In May 1976 an English version of an article in *Mens & Melodie* (March 1976) appeared in *Music Review*. The theory was widely accepted.^[14] Among others by Sir Yehudi Menuhin, Honorary President of the Elgar Society. When conducting the Variations at Carnegie Hall, NY, in 1984 he addressed the public first, explaining that the ‘Enigma’ was ‘none other’ than *Rule Britannia!*^[15]

Some ‘new’ theories became rampant since, not seldom reinventions of old wheels: Beethoven themes, Bach, unwilling counterpoints, etc. Not everybody seemed to realize that Elgar’s late 19th Century *Variations* are the example par excellence of nationalism in English music. European music in the second half of the 19th Century knew many works containing intrinsic or explicit national / nationalistic, patriotic elements. For instance Sibelius works since 1892 (including *Finlandia*, 1900), works by Grieg and by Balakirev’s circle (some of Rimsky-Korsakov’s operas, songs and orchestral pieces, Borodin’s *Prince Igor* etc.), Smetana’s *My Country*, Dvorak’s and Janacek’s output in Czechia/Bohemia, Franck and d’Indy in France, etc. Even Holland heard outstanding nationalistic pieces such as the *Piet Hein Rhapsody* for orchestra

(1900) by the young composer Peter van Anrooy (1879-1954) and operas and symphonies by Cornelis Dopper.^[16]

Britannia as Elgar's secret was not unveiled until 1974. However, in three quarters of a century very much had changed. The British Empire had crumbled. Imperial sentiments, applauded before WWI, were not favored any more, on the contrary. Britain has become critical of its history, colonialism and its Empire. Maybe few want to know now that one of the greatest pieces of English music was inspired by the heydays of imperialism, when Britain was involved in presently condemned military conflicts and expansion politics. For that very reason Elgar could have been quite right when he explained: 'it's dark saying must be left unguessed.'

Much to Elgar's surprise, the enigma was not unmasked immediately, and he expressed his annoyance in his letter of 5 November 1899 to Jaeger. Later in life it seems he did not want to be bothered by his puzzle any more. However in the late 1920's he did reply to the Times music critic Dyneley Hussey about it: 'No, Auld Lang Syne won't do'. By then Elgar probably thought differently about the Empire, the monarchy, and so on, than in 1899.^[17] His music reflected the pomp and circumstance of the late Victorian and Edwardian years. But In spite of the variations and the Empire's pomp in his program note Elgar had stressed: 'The Variations should stand simply as a 'piece' of music.'

Theodore van Houten (2012)

Literature

Adams, Byron, et al – Edward Elgar and his World, Princeton, 2007.

Anderson, Robert – Elgar, London / New York, 1993.

Bottomore, Stephen – Filming, Faking and Propaganda. The Origins of the War Film 1897-1902, (diss.), Utrecht, 2007.

Ellwood, David – The Shock of America: Europe and the Challenge of the Century, Oxford, 2012

Kennedy, Michael – Portrait of Elgar, 2nd ed., London, 1982.

Moore, Jerrold Northrop – Edward Elgar: A Creative Life, Oxford, 1984.

Parrott, Ian – Elgar, London, 1971.

Porter, Bernard – The Lion's Share, 5th ed., London, 2012.

Powell, Mrs. Richard – Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation, 2nd ed., London 1947.

Rushton, Julian – Elgar 'Enigma' Variations, Cambridge, 1999.

Van Houten, Theodore – 'You of all people', in: Music Review Vol. 37, No. 2, May 1976.

Van Houten, Theodore – 'The enigma I will not explain.', in: Mens & Melodie,

Vol. 63, #4, 2008.

Young, Percy M. – Elgar O.M., London, 1973.

Notes

[1] As the work was a ‘musical picture gallery’ it could be suggested that the enigma was ‘The Picture of Dorian Gray’, Oscar Wilde’s famous story, published in 1890. In musical terms Dorian is D Minor, which could be an anagram of ‘Nimrod’ (Var. IX). Such associations can easily hint at theories and lead to off the mark speculations concerning the enigma. Elgar scholar Dr. J.N. Moore suggested (to author, Hampstead, 14 November 1975) that the enigma represented Elgar’s ‘secret attraction to men’. Could there be a homo-erotic connotation? Could it be ‘The love that dare not speak its name’ from Wilde’s 1896 poem *Two Loves*? Such a ‘solution’ is certainly not more absurd than *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, or *Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay*.

[2] Twenty years later, after WWI, Elgar’s feelings about war, the Empire, his home country and the monarchy toned down. See e.g. Kennedy, Michael – *Portrait of Elgar*, 2nd. Ed, London 1982, p. 305.

[3] Cf.: Ghuman, Nalini – *Elgar and the British Raj: Can the Mughals march?*, in: Adams, Byron (ed.) – *Edward Elgar and his World*, Princeton / Oxford, 2007. P. 255.

[4] Bottomore, Stephen – *Filming, Faking and Propaganda. The Origins of the War Film 1897-1902*, (diss.), Utrecht, 2007. Chapter 4.

[5] The telegram to Kruger: the German Kaiser Wilhelm’s pro-Boer intervention in Britain’s troubles in South Africa, 3 January 1896.

[6] Quoted in: Porter, Bernard – *The Lion’s Share*, London, 1975. Source: Marder Arthur J. - *The Anatomy of British Sea Power*, Hamden, 1940, p. 20.

[7] Joseph Bennett (1831-1911) was a highly influential musician, music critic (*The Daily Telegraph*, *The Musical Times*, etc.) and librettist., appreciating Elgar’s work.

[8] For Maurice Maeterlinck’s plays, *Death*, *Dies Irae*, and *Death and the Maiden* see: Van Houten, Theodore – ‘The enigma I will not explain.’, in: *Mens & Melodie*, Vol. 63, #4, 2008., p. 14 and p. 17, notes 2 and 3.

[9] Burley, Rosa and Frank Carruthers – *Edward Elgar, the record of a Friendship*, London, 1972. P. 131.

[10] Quoted in: Kennedy, p. 66, note 10.

[11] Powell, Mrs. Richard – *Edward Elgar: Memories of a Variation*, 2nd ed., London 1947, p. 120.

[12] *Ibid.* p. 121.

[13] John Bull joined the choir in Hereford in 1573, soon to leave for the Royal Chapel in London, where he learned to play the organ. He was appointed organist in Hereford in December 1582, and soon as Master of the Children as well. He stayed in Hereford for some years, graduated in Oxford and in 1592 became professor at Gresham College, London, on the recommendation of Queen Elizabeth I, who greatly admired him. Bull, a prolific composer, spent the last 15 years of his life in the Netherlands, mainly as organist at Antwerp Cathedral.

[14] Cf. ‘Peterborough’ (Michael Kennedy) in *The Daily Telegraph*, 3 February 1976, and Evans, T.F. – *Elgar enigma*, *ibid.* 12 February 1976.

[15] *New York Times*, 3 November 1985, p. H 23.

[16] For more details see: Taruskin, Richard – *Nationalism*, in: *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, edited by Stanley Sadie, 2nd ed., London, 2001,

Vol. 17, p. 689-706.

[\[17\]](#) Elgar developed ambivalent feelings where it concerned class society, militarism, the aristocracy, the monarchy and the Empire of the happy few. The jingoism and quasi-military, imperial elements in his work surely seem connected with, if not inspired by his wife Caroline Alice Roberts Elgar. She was born in Bhuj, Kutch, Bombay, as the youngest child of Major-General Sir H.G. Roberts, a stalwart of the Indian Army. There was a caste gap between the musician Elgar, his background, and his wife's credentials, and he resented it. See: Porter, Bernard - *Edward Elgar and Empire*, in: *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol. 29, (2001), 1-34; Porter, Bernard, contribution to: Lewis Foreman (ed.), *Oh! My Horses! Elgar and the Great War* (Elgar Edns., 2001); and Porter, Bernard - *The Absent-Minded Imperialists*, Oxford, 2004).