PAX BRITANNICA: EDWARD ELGAR’S CARACTACUS AS A MUSICAL EXPRESSION OF BRITISH IMPERIALISM

BY

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DISSETRATION

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ABSTRACT

British composer Edward Elgar (1857 – 1934) is most famous for his later works including his “Enigma” variations, symphonies, and “Pomp and Circumstance” marches. His Choral-Orchestral output from his later years includes his Catholic-inspired oratorios The Dream of Gerontius, The Apostles, and The Kingdom. The fame brought about by public interest in his Variations helped elevate Elgar to a leader among British composers in his time. In addition to these works, Elgar’s oeuvre includes several Nationalist works, many of which are influenced by the Imperial movement of the time. These works include The Crown of India, The Banner of St. George, and the Imperial March. Among these works, Elgar’s secular cantata Caractacus has been the topic of significant discussion. Most of the discussion has focused on its jingoistic final chorus, particularly its seeming lack of congruity with the rest of the cantata. This dissertation shows how Elgar used the entire cantata to present his perception of the positive facets of the British Empire, making this chorus the logical conclusion of the work.

Chapter One gives a brief summary of Elgar’s compositional output preceding Caractacus. Chapter Two examines the propaganda and Imperialist sentiment in England at the turn of the century. Chapter Three investigates the degree to which the Imperialist sentiment affected Elgar and his interpretation of the British Empire. Chapter Four explores the tools available to understand the meaning of Elgar’s compositions. Chapter Five identifies Elgar’s nationalist sentiment as portrayed in Caractacus. Chapter Six provides portrayals of militarism and chivalry in Caractacus. Chapter Seven examines the evolution of Orbin as an example of Social Darwinism, one of the primary goals of the British Empire. Chapter Eight addresses the major breakdown in dramatic continuity during scenes four and five and their role in emphasizing Elgar’s portrayal of the Pax Britannica.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

EDWARD ELGAR AND CARACTACUS

Many associate the emergence of Edward Elgar as a legitimate international composer with the premiere of the *Enigma Variations* (1899) and *The Dream of Gerontius* (1900). While *Gerontius* was praised by Richard Strauss, John Porte, an Elgar historian, has referred to the *Enigma Variations* as “… the first great work of Elgar in which his supreme genius was fully manifested” (Porte 1970, 60). These two works are often cited as the precursors to his later great works – the oratorios *The Apostles* and *The Kingdom*, and the symphonies – a connection that led J.P.E. Harper-Scott to label Elgar a “Modernist” (Harper-Scott, Edward Elgar, Modernist 2006). Few scholars have studied Elgar’s early works in detail, often dismissing them as trite or unimpressive. Yet, some have recognized the seeds of Elgar’s great melodies and expressive orchestration in his early works. Elgar’s secular cantata *Caractacus* as a of Elgar’s early works is the focus of this dissertation.

Upon first listening, *Caractacus* presents the long and expressive melodies, leitmotivs and their transformations, intricate orchestration, and expressive harmonization that typify Elgar’s later compositions. The libretto is engaging – quite a bit more so than that of its immediate predecessor *King Olaf* – with a plot line drawn from British history. *Caractacus*, however, has not enjoyed the warm reception that *Gerontius* and the later works have garnered. Its relatively cool reception is likely due to its overtly jingoistic final chorus. The chorus’s blatant pro-English mentality, as well as its apparent lack of continuity with the rest of the work, has led to scholars and performers alike to dismiss the work as Elgar’s overt attempt to gain
respect by propagandizing the political attitudes of an upper class he yearned to join. While acknowledging the effects of Elgar’s self-interest on this composition, it is the purpose of this dissertation to show that the work as a whole represents the ideals of the *Pax Britannica* – a term associated with the positive aspects of British Imperialism. This context casts the final chorus in a positive light and as the logical culmination of the principles advanced throughout the rest of the work.

After a brief discussion of Elgar’s musical output before *Caractacus*, the author will connect *Caractacus* to these positive ideals of the British Empire. Following an explication of the degree to which Elgar embraces the three primary propagandist messages surrounding the British Empire (naturalism, chivalry, and Social Darwinism), the final four chapters will show how Elgar expressed these ideals throughout *Caractacus*. It is only given the larger context of the *Pax Britannica* that we may correctly understand the function of the otherwise problematic final chorus.
CHAPTER ONE
ELGAR’S EARLY WORKS

Edward Elgar often perceived himself as a musical outsider. In his own words “...as a child and as a young man and as a mature man no single person was ever kind to me (Kennedy 1968, 3).” As the child of a shopkeeper (albeit a music shop), Elgar did not receive an education, musical or otherwise (Porte 1970, 4). In addition, as a member of the middle class (Cannadine 2007, 23), he lacked the connections to the British Aristocracy necessary to lead a successful life as a composer.

Despite their inability to provide him with a formal musical education, Elgar’s parents provided Edward with piano and theory lessons from a singer at the local Catholic Church (Anderson 1993, 5). He also spent hours in his father’s music shop, gaining a familiarity with various instruments that would foster his skills in orchestration (Porte 1970, 4). He read voraciously, both musical and non-musical texts, as he related in an interview for The Strand Magazine:

I had the good fortune to be thrown among an unsorted collection of old books. There were books of all kinds, and all distinguished by the characteristic that they were for the most part incomplete. I busied myself for days and weeks arranging them. I picked out the theological books, of which there were a great many, and put them on one side. Then I made a place for the Elizabethan dramatists, the chronicles including Barker’s and Hollinshead’s, besides a tolerable collection of old poets and translations of Voltaire and all sorts of things up to the eighteenth century. Then I began to read. I used to get up at four or five o’clock in the summer and read -- every available opportunity found me reading. I read till dark. I finished reading every one of those books -- including the theology. The result of that reading has been that people tell me that I know more of life up to the eighteenth century than I do of my own time, and it is probably true (Adams 2007, 67).

Elgar distinctly remembered his mother’s interest in Longfellow, especially Hyperion and The Saga of King Olaf (Kennedy 1968, 6). The influence of Longfellow is quite evident, considering
that many of his early dramatic cantatas are settings of Longfellow’s texts. Byron Adams listed the heavily annotated musical texts found in Elgar’s library, including Ernst Pauer’s *Musical Forms*, John Stainer’s *Composition* and *A Treatise on Harmony*, and Cherubini’s *Counterpoint* (Adams 2007, 79).

Despite his intention of pursuing a non-musical career, Elgar found himself repeatedly drawn to music. At an early age, Elgar joined his father as a violinist in the orchestra for the Three Choirs Festival (the festival where many of his works would eventually be performed) (Porte 1970, 4). He extemporized at the piano and wrote his first “composition” (according to his mother) as early as eight years old in 1866 (Anderson 1993, 5). As Elgar grew older, he benefitted from several musical opportunities: He became a violin teacher at age 19 and organized a small wind quintet to master his skills as a bassoonist (Anderson 1993, 10). He also took the opportunity to work with the local Glee Club and taught band at a local asylum. In recognition of his musical talent, his hometown created the Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society, naming Elgar as its leader. These opportunities to conduct willing laboratories of live performers also helped Elgar refine his compositional skills. He arranged dances and composed original works both for the wind quintet and to accompany the weekly dances held at the asylum; he also wrote music for the Glee Club and the Worcester Amateur Instrumental Society. One of his smaller compositions, *Grazioso*, was even performed at the National History Museum in 1879 (Young 1973, 45-47).

Elgar’s first major symphonic composition was the *Froissart* overture, which was performed at the Three Choirs Festival of 1890. Inspired by a phrase from Keats that was inscribed on the overture’s title page “When chivalry lifted up her lance on high,” the *Froissart* overture is an ideal example of how Elgar’s exterior work with local amateur musical groups
affected his evolving compositional style. Soaring phrases, singable folk-like melodies and grand

gestures made Froissart a memorable point of departure for Elgar’s future career. The critic

Joseph Bennett reported that the overture was “…one of considerable interest, arising rather from

promise than actual achievement. (Anderson 1993, 24). Michael Kennedy had identified

Froissart, with the Serenade for Strings, as the predecessors of “everything Elgar.” (Kennedy

1968, 29).

In 1893, Hugh Blair encouraged the Worcester Festival Choral Society to premiere

Elgar’s next major composition, The Black Knight (Young 1973, 68). This was his first

experiment in composing a dramatic choral work which took its text from Longfellow’s

Hyperion. Conceived as four movements, Elgar first envisioned the work as a choral symphony;

only later did he call it a “dramatic cantata,” a genre that Michael Kennedy suggests was
developed by Elgar and used again in King Olaf and Caractacus (Kennedy 1968, 48).\(^1\) Having

already published a few of Elgar’s shorter compositions in the past, Novello agreed to publish

The Black Knight (Young 1973, 68). Its publication led to multiple performances which, in turn,

raised public interest in commissioning Elgar in the following years. The evident popularity of

the genre, both with choral societies and Novello may have provided the impetus for Elgar to

continue producing similarly constructed works.

Elgar became increasingly busy from 1895 to 1896, fulfilling two commissions for choir

festivals in 1896 (Adams 2007, 75-76). Lux Christi premiered at the Worcester Festival in

September of 1896. An oratorio based on the biblical story of Christ healing a blind man,

\(^1\) Kennedy points out that the dramatic cantata was so short-lived because of the difficulty of the concept: the
dramatic cantata doesn’t have the drama that an opera would have, nor the musical complexity of the Oratorios

and Cantatas that were popular at the time.
Novello asked that the oratorio’s Latin title was changed to *The Light of Life* to improve its chances among Protestant choirs (Holloway 2004, 26).

*Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, performed just two months after *Lux Christi* at the new North Staffordshire Choral Festival (Kennedy 1968, 35), was Elgar’s second attempt at a Dramatic Cantata. Like *The Black Knight*, Elgar drew his libretto from Longfellow, whose poetry was quite popular among English audiences at the time. This time, however, he leaned on his friend Harry Acworth to make the libretto more suitable for a musical setting. Comments from Elgar’s daily diary document how busy he was with its composition in the months prior to *Lux Christi* (Young 1973, 73). While Elgar chose a dramatic plot for this work, his and Acworth’s decision to utilize a gathering of bards as the story’s characters stifled the dramatic potential. The story of King Olaf converting Ironbeard to Christianity comprises the drama of the entire first scene (the largest scene of the cantata). After this scene, the story spins off into a series of failed romantic interests and murder attempts that dilute the dramatic intensity of this promising beginning. The work culminates with the well-known and oft-performed chorus “As Torrents in Summer.” Performances of *King Olaf, Lux Christi*, and *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* all in the same year finally garnered some interest in Elgar’s work from elite musical and aristocratic circles.

Even though Elgar declared in a letter shortly after finishing *Lux Christi* “My work is done and I feel I have proved myself a man! but I cannot afford to write anymore. (Anderson 1993, 34),” his newly-won popularity prevented any retirement from composition. Novello commissioned him to write two major works for Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee of 1897;

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2 *Scenes from the Bavarian Highlands* was a series of short songs for chorus and orchestra composed to imitate the folk songs Alice and Edward heard while on vacation in Bavaria, with texts by Alice and music by Elgar (Porte 1970, 42).
these constituted his first major commissions outside of his hometown as well as his first performances in London (Kennedy 1968, 36). Elgar accepted the commission, particularly because success here could lead to success throughout England. While his first new commission, *The Banner of St. George*, was not popular enough to remain in the collective memory for long after its premiere, his *Imperial March* enjoyed numerous enthusiastic performances (Young 1973, 79). While many of Elgar’s previous compositions had been inspired by elements of chivalry, this march may have been Elgar’s first foray into purely Nationalist music. With it, Elgar demonstrated an innate gift for crafting such music, a reputation that continued long after *Caractacus* in such works as *The Crown of India* and the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches.

Despite his success at the Diamond Jubilee, Elgar became quite frustrated, as is evident in a letter to Jaeger in 1897:

> Look here! In two years I have written Lux Xti, King Olaf, Impl. March, S. George, Organ Sonata (big), Te Deum. Recd £86 15. Debtor £100 – after paying my own expenses at two festivals. I feel a d—d fool! … for thinking of music at all. No amount of “kind encouragement” can blot out these simple figures. (Kennedy 1968, 39)

While such self-deprecating language was common for Elgar, his fortune would soon change. In the same summer following the Diamond Jubilee, he would be commissioned to compose a work for the Leeds Festival, one of the larger, more prestigious music festivals in the country. Bolstered by Queen Victoria’s acceptance of Elgar’s dedication, this composition directly preceded the two compositions *The Dream of Gerontius* and *Variations on a Theme (Enigma)* that secured Elgar’s international reputation. This work was the dramatic cantata *Caractacus*.

**Caractacus**

Elgar’s selection of Caractacus as the subject of this Leeds commission was inspired by a visit that he and his made to see his mother. As she recounts:
I said Oh! Ed. Look at the lovely old Hill. Can't we write some tale about it. I quite long to have something worked up about it; so full of interest and so much historical interest. (Moore 1984, 225)

Ann Elgar was referring to the Herefordshire Beacon, part of the earthworks reportedly made by Caractacus to defend against Roman invaders and a vista that was framed by the doorway of her home (Moore 1984, 225).

Edward followed his mother’s suggestion, proposing to the Leeds Festival commission a symphony based on the lives of several British heroes, including Caractacus (Lace 1997, 134). However, since the commissioned work was to be the highlight of the Leeds Festival, the committee preferred a cantata, a request that prompted Elgar to settle on the story of Caractacus. While several dramatic presentations of the story of Caractacus existed, Elgar asked his friend, A.C. Acworth (who had assisted him in tweaking the libretto for King Olaf) to write the libretto for this new cantata.

The British historian Tacitus summarized the story of Caractacus in *The Annals of Imperial Rome*, characterizing him as the Captain of British citizens (then referred to as Silurians) and the leader of many wars against the Roman Empire. Tacitus described Caractacus’ selection of the Malvern Hills as an ideal defensive position because of its hills and rivers. Tacitus, clearly speaking from the Roman perspective, praised the forces of the Roman army, lauding their skilled defeat of the Silurian army. After his defeat, Caractacus sought refuge with the Queen of the Brigantes, who eventually turned him over to the Roman army. Finally, Caractacus and his troops were brought to Rome, where Caractacus pled for and was granted pardon by Emperor Claudius (Tacitus 1956).

Charles McGuire identifies another text (McGuire 2007a, 60) available to Elgar and Acworth: James McKay’s *The British Camp on the Herefordshire Beacon* (1875). McKay’s text
helped them to see the story of Caractacus from a decidedly pro-Imperialist point of view. McKay specifically identified the Herefordshire Beacon as the “…seat of a numerous population, and a centre of religion, and a high court of judgment… (McKay 1875, 149)” He also retold Caractacus’ seven years of successfully holding back Rome’s army, his tragic defeat, and his “admirable” speech that inspired Emperor Claudius to grant him clemency, adding that “every conceivable honor was heaped upon [Caractacus]” in Rome (McKay 1875, 168).

Acworth’s version of Caractacus retained the core elements (the Herefordshire Beacon, the defeat by Rome, and Caractacus’ pardon) found in both renditions of the story, while adding several additional plot elements in the first three scenes of the cantata. In the first scene, Caractacus is joined by his daughter, Eigen, and her lover, Orbin, a bard who served the Druids on Herefordshire Beacon. Eigen recounts the prophecy of a Druid Maiden regarding Caractacus’ imminent battle with the Romans, and Caractacus goes to discuss the prophecy with the Druids. Acworth’s second scene portrays the rites used by the Druids to foretell the outcome of the battle. Orbin foresees defeat, but the Druid Priest deceives Caractacus with a vague prophecy that leads Caractacus to believe his efforts will be successful. When Orbin tries to tell Caractacus the truth, he is banished from the druid’s order, ultimately choosing to join Caractacus in battle. The inclusion of Druids in the story is not unfounded. In addition to Charles McGuire’s discussion of druidical legends in James McKay’s account, McGuire points out that some of the other historical texts that Acworth translated – like the poems The Ballads of Marathas – may have led him to include the Druids (McGuire 2007a, 71). In the third scene we see a pastoral depiction of Orbin and Eigen’s last evening together in the woods before Orbin leaves for battle. Acworth acknowledges the addition of this romantic interest in his introduction to the vocal score of Caractacus, attributing to it nothing more than diversifying the plot.
In the fourth and fifth scenes, Acworth pens an account of the battle only from the distant vantage point of both the villagers and the soldiers retreating from the battle scene. In looking at the overall structure of Elgar and Acworth’s setting of the scene, there is significant fault in the dramatic disparity between the first three scenes and scene four and five. The audience observes first-hand the interaction between Caractacus, Eigen, and Orbin in scene one, the incantations of the druids in scene two, and the love between Eigen and Orbin in scene three. However, with scenes four and five, the audience is suddenly removed from direct observation of the action. Instead of participating with and observing the battle between British and Roman armies, the audience finds itself left with the villagers at the Malvern Hills, trying to decipher the rumors and sounds to determine the outcome of the war from a distance. Later, Eigen enters the scene, describing a conversation she had earlier with a druid maiden describing the defeat of the British army. The soldiers then enter the scene, describing their defeat and eventual retreat, followed by an affecting lament by Caractacus, describing his valiant leadership of the British Troops, despite their failure. The fifth scene is only one chorus that is merely 53 measures long. According to the description at the beginning of the scene, British captives are supposed to be embarking on Roman galleys. However, the chorus of Druid Maidens and a Bard simply comment on the sad state of British captives who will never see their homeland again. The chorus seems merely to be a preparation for the triumphal Roman march at the beginning of the sixth scene.

Such a significant break in the dramatic continuity certainly led to a disparity in Elgar’s assignment of events to each scene. Clearly the bulk of his music comprises the first three scenes and the final scene. As shown in the table below, nearly two-thirds of the music is contained in these first three scenes, scenes four and five accounting for twenty percent of the music.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene</th>
<th>Musical Numbers</th>
<th>Measures</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Chorus (Soldiers) – “Watchmen, Alert”</td>
<td>590</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caractacus, Aria – “The air is sweet”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caractacus, Eigen, Orbin, Dialogue and Trio</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chrous (Nymphs) – “Rest, Weary Monarch”</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Chorus (Druids) and Arch-Druid - “Tread the Mystic Circle”</td>
<td>533</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Chorus (Druids) – Invocation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arch-Druid and Caractacus, Dialogue</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Caractacus and Chorus (Druids) – “Leap, Leap to light”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arch-Druid and Orbin – Banishment of Orbin</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Arch-Druid and Chorus (Druids) – “Taranis”</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Orchestra – Woodland Interlude</td>
<td>272</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chorus (Druids) – “Come! Beneath our woodland bow’rs”</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eigen – “O’er arched by leaves”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Orbin – “Last night”</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Eigen, Orbin – “Thine in death”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chorus (Maidens) – “Wild Rumors shake our calm retreat”</td>
<td>361</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eigen – “When the glow of evening had died”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chorus (Soldiers) – “We were gathered”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Caractacus – “O my warriors”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Chorus – “Captive Britons”</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
At the beginning of the sixth scene, the audience finds itself back in the center of the action, as an orchestral fanfare signals the entrance of the Roman armies and Emperor Claudius. Following their music, Acworth recounts the entrance of Caractacus, his plea for the welfare of his people (a speech that departs significantly from the account given by Tacitus), and his resulting pardon.

After Caractacus’ pardon, Acworth adds the concluding chorus which has created contention among Elgar scholars who regard it as incongruous with the rest of the plot:

The clang of arms is over,
Abide in peace and brood
On glorious ages coming,
And Kings of British blood.
The light descends from heaven,
The centuries roll away,
The empire of the Roman
Is crumbled into clay;
The eagle’s flight is ended,
His weary wings are furl’d;
The Oak has grown and shadow’d
The shores of all the world.
Britons, alert! and fear not,
Tho’ round your path of power,
Opposing cohorts gather,
    And jealous tyrants lower;
On – tho’ the world desert you,
    On – so your cause be right;
Briton’s, alert! and fear not,
    But gird your loins for fight.
And ever your dominion
    From age to age shall grow
O’er peoples undiscover’d
    In lands we cannot know;
And where the flag of Britain
    Its triple crosses rears,
No slave shall be for subject,
    No trophy wet with tears;
But folk shall bless the banner,
    And bless the crosses twin’d,
They bear the gift of freedom
    On every blowing wind;
Nor shall her might diminish
    While firm she holds the faith
Of equal law to all men –
    And holds it to the death;
For all the world shall learn it –
    Though long the task shall be –
The text of Britain’s teaching,
    The message of the free;
And when at last they find it,
    The nations all shall stand
And hymn the praise of Britain,
    Like brothers, hand in hand.

It does seem ironic that a cantata relating Britain’s defeat by the Roman Empire conclude with a chorus singing the Britain’s praise. While Caractacus’ clemency seems to mark a clear turning point in Britain’s development as a nation, the story still primarily concerns their defeat. Michael Kennedy summarizes the issue as follows:

The final chorus – ‘The clang of arms is over’ - has been a stumbling-block for the squeamish. Somewhat incongruously, since the cantata is about a British defeat, the end of the Roman Empire is foreseen, to be supplanted by the evangelistic paternalism of the British Empire. Yet Elgar (perhaps ironically) based the music of this chorus on the thematic material of the Arch-Druid’s deliberately false prophecy of Caractacus's victory. (Kennedy 2004, 56)
This contradiction has fueled intense discussion as to whether Elgar’s imperialist sentiment was a façade, his honest belief, or something in between the two. McVeagh tries to downplay the jingoism of the chorus, pointing out that it is less aggressive than the second verse of the British National Anthem and that it “…shows a strand, a genuine celebration of patriotism… (McVeagh 2007, 43)” In attempting to portray Elgar as truly patriotic and not secretly cynical, Patrick Little suggests that the Arch-Druid’s prophecy in scene two was not, in fact, deceptive, but a prophecy of England’s eventual ascent. Little goes so far as to suggest that the final chorus is a continuation of the Arch-Druid’s prophecy in scene two (McVeagh 2007, 43). McGuire suggests that, in Caractacus, Elgar created a metaphor in which the current British Empire was represented by Rome and Ancient Britain represented the current India (McGuire 2007a, 38). Finally, Robin Holloway’s harmonic analysis of the final chorus argues that Elgar didn’t truly subscribe to what the text was saying (Holloway 2004, 79). Trying to understand the truth behind this particularly inflammatory chorus (so inflammatory that it offended Jaeger) is a task fraught with conflict and disagreement.

In contrast, this dissertation will argue that Elgar’s desire to achieve upward social mobility led him to write Caractacus in a way that played to the aristocratic perceptions of Imperialism while still embracing his own National pride. Seeing the entirety of the dramatic cantata as a paean to the greatness of the British Empire suggests that the final chorus is the logical conclusion to a highly imperial work.
CHAPTER TWO

PAX BRITANNICA: IMPERIALIST SENTIMENT FROM THE 1870’S TO THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

It is particularly difficult to come to a singular understanding of the terms “imperialism” and “nationalism” as they were used during the middle of the nineteenth century, given the great amount of research dedicated to the topic in recent years. In addition, it is only in the past few decades that the imperialist era of Britain has been wholly accepted for what it was, as opposed to what apologists or scholars have tried to make of it. Instead of smoothing over the rough edges of imperialism in order to rehabilitate some of our favorite characters (such as Elgar), scholars are acknowledging the often troubling realities of imperialism. Adding to the confusion is the fact that scholars approach and analyze imperialism from a variety of viewpoints: political, economic, and moral. Two authors: Winifried Baumbart and James Morris wrote broad analyses of the British Empire in the last half of the 20th century. In an attempt to cut through the stilted prose of the summaries like those listed above, the books of the last twenty years approach the middle nineteenth century in Britain with a somewhat rigid definition of imperialism. From Porter’s The Absent-Minded Imperialists and The Lion’s Share to Willie Thompson’s Global Expansion, there is a sense that imperialism can only be defined by efforts to rule over – to “imperialize” – the colonies. This narrow definition, while helpful in clearing away some of the

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3 Bernard Porter’s The Absent-Minded Imperialists (2004) has a bibliography of over 400 secondary sources, many of them published shortly before Porter’s publication.

4 In 1982, Winifried Baumgart wrote an analysis titled Imperialism: The Idea and Reality of British and French Colonial Expansion, 1880 – 1914. It is a well thought-out book that outlines four different ways of defining imperialism: Political and Historical, National and Social-Psychological, Economic, and Social-Economic. Although his writings summarize both French and British imperialism, his ideas lead to a greater understanding of the complex construct in imperialism. James Morris’ 1968 publication Pax Britannica: The Climax of an Empire also discusses the multiple facets of British imperialism. Although his summary downplays the more shameful elements in Britain’s history, he does a relatively balanced job of pointing out the variety of motives that kept the Empire afloat during its apex and waning years.

5 Porter refers to definitions of imperialism such as militarism, masculinism, and ‘England’s social mission’ as “bizarre candidates” for inclusion in a “scholarly definition” of imperialism (Porter 2004, 6). The general tone of
patriotic sentiment and pathos found in writings of the middle of the twentieth century, eliminates many of the other important aspects of imperialism. If one can accept, as Morris and Baumgart suggest, that the British Empire was interested not only in political rule of the colonies that were part of its empire, but also in ensuring that British (and, by implication, European) culture was disseminated to the wide reaches of the world, then a definition like Porter’s, where imperialism includes only Britain’s attempts to take over the rule of its colonies, eliminates a disturbingly large segment of Britain’s Imperialist culture.

After all, in this study, it is the culture of imperialism that is most important. In studying the imperialist influences in Elgar’s music, it becomes almost superfluous to analyze the political and economic aspects of Britain’s expansion. It is more likely that Caractacus was composed for the class of British citizens most likely to attend the Leeds festival. This study, then, must focus on the public perception of the British Empire and the culture that surrounded imperialism. Certainly, all British citizens were affected by it and responded to the British Empire in their own way. Realizing that the spices and tea brought in by the East India Company were only possible because of the British Empire, the average middle class citizen could not ignore it. The message was, after all, at the center of countless advertisements.

To truly understand how the culture of British Imperialism affected Elgar’s Caractacus, it is necessary to understand as precisely as possible the various strands that comprised the

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6 The inside cover of John Mackenzie’s Propaganda and Empire shows an advertisement for Lipton’s teas. The advertisement is a clear depiction of Indian landscape; full of elephants, palm trees, and Indian workers. The banner held in the center of the advertisement reads “Lipton’s Teas: proclaimed victorious over all others” [emphasis by the author]. As shown in Mackenzie’s book and as will be discussed later, this type of advertisement was a pervasive influence on the middle class’ understanding of the British Empire.
imperialist culture at the turn of the nineteenth century. If there was a message being fed to the average British subject, as Mackenzie’s book suggests (MacKenzie 1984), we must understand what that message was. Only when we have a clear understanding of the message that Elgar heard can we begin to approach how much of that message he accepted, and how much of it influenced his composition. To accomplish this, we must attempt to understand the various definitions of imperialism. By separating each definition and its associated stigma, we can then loosen the knot of scholarship on the British Empire and extract the threads present in Elgar’s cultural surroundings that were more likely to influence his ideas and composition.

**Definitions of Imperialism**

While the British Empire had been developing for decades before, many writers mark Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee as the climax of the British Empire. James Morris (Morris 1968, 21) and Jeffrey Richards (Richards 2001) both begin their books with a discussion of the Diamond Jubilee, marking it as the pinnacle of the British Empire. The Diamond Jubilee, however, is better understood as the moment when British leaders determined that it was necessary to present a more carefully groomed image of the empire to its subjects; it was the moment when Britain realized it needed to do something to ensure that the all English are made proud of their Empire and Imperialism (Porter 2004, 164).

Defining the various facets of imperialism, however, has become a particularly daunting challenge. James Morris quotes the Oxford Dictionary to clarify his interpretation of imperialism. Although we do not know which edition Morris quotes, his citation sheds some light on the subject:
...the principle or policy of seeking, or at least not refusing, an extension of the British Empire in directions where trading interests and investments require the protection of the flag... (Morris 1968, 115)

The definition seems to focus on only one aspect of imperialism – the economic motivation to extend the British Empire. Earlier in his book, Morris presents quite a different picture of imperialism:

It was a principle of new Imperialism that this girdling of the world was a fertilization, and that the distribution of British authority everywhere was picking up pollen here, depositing it there, and making the earth blossom in new colours. (Morris 1968, 67)

Here, we get the sense that British Imperialism was about more than just trade, that it included a desire to distribute British culture more widely. According to this statement, there is an idea that, by bringing more of the world under the British flag, the goodness of English culture could spread to other areas of the world and improve their civilization. Although this statement seems particularly idealist in theory, the core message is the superiority of British culture and its potential to improve the productivity of a previously “ungoverned” colony. However ethnocentric this statement may be, assuming that the British system of government is the best (and perhaps only) method of government, the concept of “political imperialism” forms an important part of this multi-faceted concept.

Morris raises another aspect of imperialism in his discussion of Dr. Stanley Livingstone, the well-known missionary to the African nations:

Above all he was serving God, and revealing the Christian truth to people miserably denied it. Christian philanthropy was seldom altogether absent from the imperial enterprises of the Victorians. (Morris 1968, 121)

The moral obligation to be a positive influence to the less civilized people of the world may permeate nineteenth century and present-day scholarship, but it is a definition that Bernard Porter
dismisses as “bizarre” in his discussion of imperialism (Porter 2004, 6). While the moral obligation to civilize the savage colonies probably had little influence on British policy at that time, it was central to the role of missionary evangelism and cannot be removed from the culture of British Imperialism.

The disagreement between Morris’ and Porter’s definitions of imperialism underscores the need to isolate the differing viewpoints on imperialism in order to understand it more clearly. As Winifried Baumgart, one of the few scholars to recognize the need for this distinction puts it:

It [imperialism] is well-worn like an old coin, but, in contrast to a coin, it has more than two sides. It is as many-faceted as a crystal, but lacks the crystal’s transparency and clearly defined lines. (Baumgart 1982, 1)

The next sections will seek to define more clearly some of the facets of imperialism: economic, political, and moral by isolating each facet and identifying the variety of rhetoric, policy, and propaganda related to each facet.

The Economic Facet

In J. R. Seeley’s series of lectures entitled *The Expansion of England*, he states that the colonies are “…lands for the landless, prosperity and wealth for those of straightened circumstances (Seeley 1904, 69).” Although Seeley’s statement refers more directly to business opportunities for the individual, it certainly highlights the economic motivations behind Britain’s imperialist policy. Beginning with the East India Company, which received its charter in 1600 from Queen Elizabeth I and granted a 15-year monopoly on all trade between Britain and the East (Smith 1998, 16), one of the major motivating factors for Britain’s annexation of territory was the material goods available in that country that could profit England.

Romantics now saw their Empire as a cornucopia from which good things flowed along the seaways to their islands -- gold and furs from the western possessions, gold, skins,
diamonds, wines and feathers from the south, silk, rice, tea and precious stones from the east, ivory from Africa and food from all quarters. Wool, wood, rubber, cotton, tin, iron ore, zinc -- all these essentials of British prosperity, produced within the Empire, flowed back to Britain in a safe sure stream. (Morris 1968, 99)

The benefits of imperialism, however, did not end simply with providing raw materials for England, but included the number of potential customers for English goods. England had a tendency to create more supply than there was actual demand on the island alone. By controlling the trade opportunities available to their colonies, the British government assured that this surplus would be consumed, thereby enhancing the financial security of its subjects. As described in both Morris’ and Baumgart’s discussions, the economic theory of J.A. Hobson considered the whole of British Imperialism to be one large and intricately designed sales device (Morris 1968, 103).

The economic facet of imperialism, however, was not merely limited to ensuring the financial strength of England, but also included a desire to bolster the economic viability of the colonies. J.A. Froude, in his book *Oceana* that was published around the same time as Seeley’s essays and designed to spotlight the greatness of the British Empire, said that: “If these colonies remain attached to the mother country, a great and prosperous destiny seems, in human probability, assured to them (Bennet 1953, 299).” The British saw themselves as advancing the economic stability of the colonies in addition to their own stability.

Perhaps this facet is the most clear-cut view of imperialism because the British trade policy is so clearly understood. However, once one begins to include the other facets of imperialism, economic motivations become less significant. Since economic control of the

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7 In his chapter on economic imperialism, Baumgart presents and analyzes two different theories – one by J.A. Hobson and the other by Vladimir Lenin – on the economic viability of the imperialist model. In his analysis, Baumgart points out that both economists were presenting their ideas as part of a propagandist movement, not merely a philosophical treatise. Although Baumgart uses this knowledge to expose their biases, it shows that economics played a large role in defending imperialism.
colonies inevitably required political control, it seems that the two most blended facets are economic and political.

The Political Facet

Beyond England’s desire to have a variety of markets to increase their own economic stability, England was expansionistic for the prestige of having a large empire. Particularly beginning in the last two decades of the 19th century, most European countries were involved in an undeclared race to colonize the un-civilized nations of the world. England’s lead in this area was a source of great national pride:

The imperialist feels a profound pride in the magnificent heritage of empire won by the courage and energy of his ancestry. … He is convinced that the discharge of the duties of his great inheritance has an educational influence and a morally bracing effect on the character of the British people, and that the spread of British rule extends to every race brought within its sphere the incalculable benefits of just law, tolerant trade, and considerate government. (Porter 1996)

During a speech at Bradford in 1870, William Edward Forster countered the beliefs of some that the colonies should be allowed to govern themselves.

It makes it clear to me that neither in England nor in the colonies do we intend that the English Empire shall be broken up. It may be a dream, but I still believe in its fulfillment, I believe that the time will come when, by some means or another, statesmen will be able to weld a bond together which will unite the English-speaking people in our colonies at present -- unite them with the mother country in one great confederation. (Bennet 1953, 248)

Beyond the desire to be in control of such a large portion of the world, Englishmen felt that they had a responsibility to “spread good government throughout the world (Morris 1968, 124).” They believed that their government was so worthwhile that it could be able to lift the uncivilized, ungoverned people of the world to a higher level of governmental and interpersonal relationships. Morris continues:
Ever since the triumphant conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars [the British] had seemed to be arbiters of the world's affairs, righting a balance here, dismissing a potentate there, ringing the earth with railways and submarine cables, lending money everywhere, peopling empty places with men of the British stock, grandly revenging wrongs, converting pagans, discovering unknown lakes, setting up dynasties, emancipating slaves, winning wards, putting down mutinies, keeping Turks in their place and building bigger and faster battleships (Morris 1968, 22).

The British government became the police of the world, acting to ensure that peace was kept and that disputes between countries were resolved. In many ways, this role stemmed from their pride and desire to control the smaller countries of the world. With this philosophy in mind, Britain – proclaiming a *Pax Britannica* – often compared itself to the Roman Empire:

> The Pax Britannica was extolled as a guarantee of order and stability in a world of jostling and expansionist nations driven by Machiavellian desires. After all, as Lord Rosebery had intoned, the British Empire was ‘the greatest secular agency for good the world has seen’ (Betts 1971)

> The responsibility to guarantee world order and stability also produced a militaristic and jingoistic rhetoric that ran throughout the British Empire. This complicated mix of pacifism and militarism was clear in the words of this popular song in the 1870’s:

> We don’t want to fight,  
> but, by jingo, if we do,  
> we’ve got the men,  
> we’ve got the ships,  
> we’ve got the money too. (Baumgart 1982, 49)

It was with such rhetoric that England glorified their military, drawing from themes of chivalry to heighten the honor of being a soldier and to justify the actions of the military in taking over the world.

In direct contrast to honoring militaristic control, much of the rhetoric suggested that the political aspect of imperialism was less concerned with the political control of the colonies than
in training them to participate in their own government. John Bright, discussing the future of India in 1877, points to the ideal outcome of training the colonies in government:

I believe that it is our duty not only to govern India well now for our own sakes and to satisfy our own conscience, but so arrange its government and so to administer it that we should look forward to the time--which may be distant, but may not be so remote -- when India will have to take up her own government, and administer it in her own fashion (Bennet 1953, 263).

Such political imperialism, while certainly an ideal, brought a more human side to Britain’s imperialist advances. This human side tends to blend into the morality of imperialism.

The Moral Facet

The moral facet of imperialism is one of its most hotly contested aspects. Despite the criticisms of approaching imperialism from this angle, there is considerable evidence that such dialogue was a regular part of the conversation in the 1870’s. Morris summarizes the idea of Britain’s responsibility of the well-being of its fellow man in this way:

To men of this persuasion the Pax Britannica was like a great surgical clamp, an elaborate device of joints and fittings which, adjusted properly on its traps and trolley's, kept any dislocated limb stoutly on the mend. It had cured many of the evils of India, where peace really had been universal since the end of the Mutiny forty years before, and where the ferocious old antagonisms between race and race, creed and creed, rajah and mogul, were now only colourful sagas in folk-memory. It had apparently healed the breaches between the British and the French in Canada, where the new confederation was a delicate equilibrium between the two. It had brought order to the quarrelsome sultans of the Malay Peninsula, ended the piracy of the Persian Gulf, reduced the cannibals of Australia to shirts and wage-rates, and for eight hundred years kept the unruly Irish under control. This was the British specialty: like doctors under the spell of some incantatory oath, the imperialists felt mystically impelled to find new patients (Morris 1968, 125).

Some of the confusion about the moral aspect of imperialism stems from its different manifestations, three of which (missionary work, the white man’s burden, and Social Darwinism) are summarized below.
The most prominent aspect of the moral responsibility to help “savages” was the English participation in missionary efforts. Men like Dr. Livingstone traveled deep into uncivilized areas of the British Empire (in his case, Africa) to bring the light of Christianity to the heathens. A variety of missionary parties were formed, including the Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, and the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (Smith 1998, 43). John Mackenzie, a member of the London Missionary Society summarized the position of such groups:

The people who are living under English law are in a far more advantageous position as to the reception of the Gospel than when they were living in their own heathen towns surrounded by all its thralls and sanctions (Smith 1998, 44).

Missionary service did not always produce the results that society expected. In fact, it quickly became apparent that heathen nations were not as receptive to Christianity as was expected. Missionary efforts did, however, advance the second aspect of moral imperialism, which Rudyard Kipling labeled the “white man’s burden.”

The missionary urge in its most basic sense--the conversion of heathens to Christianity--had acquired several new possessions for the empire. The missionaries were seldom consciously colonizers, but their old ideas of establishing independent native theocracies had withered in the face of Africa’s pagan awfulness, and now they were generally for the expansion of British rule as the best available medium for the reclamation of savages (Morris 1968, 123).

The “White Man’s Burden” was the responsibility borne by individual British characters whose superior education was an asset to uncivilized colonies. This notion often blended seamlessly

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8 This reference comes from a poem by the same title of Rudyard Kipling that summarizes some of the responsibilities of England to lesser civilizations.

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into militarism. Militaries led by native Britons trained the constituency of each colony to emulate British values.⁹

The “White Man’s Burden” goes well beyond the training of soldiers. Britain saw itself as responsible for the successful management of its colonies. This mindset moves beyond missionary zeal or even political arbitration to include protection of the colonies, as stated by Archibald Philip Primrose in 1883: “She can only blindly work, trying to do her best for these her children—for her greatest children as for her least children -- and in that attempt I pray she may be successful (Bennet 1953, 282).”

The belief that England was the “mother” of lesser countries of the world and in the obligation of its missionaries to take care of the savages of their colonies both contribute to the idea of Social Darwinism. Based on the ideas of Darwin’s theories of natural selection, particularly the idea that some individuals in a species are less qualified, the British applied this concept to the human race (MacKenzie 1984, 126). The British believed that they had a responsibility to help the less-civilized races to evolve towards a more civilized state. The idea of a lower race, however, often led to discriminatory beliefs like those espoused by Steevens:

They are a specimen of the raw material. Their very ugliness and stupidity furnish just the point. It is because there are people like this in the world that there is an Imperial Britain. This sort of creature has to be ruled, so we rule him, for his good and our own (Morris 1968, 132).

Such beliefs led to the policies that made Britain ashamed of their imperialist past. It is important to understand that the roots of this shame are rooted both in missionary activity and the notion of

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⁹ This concept is best exemplified in the special edition of the Daily Mail for the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. With military from all corners of the British Empire marching through the streets of London, the positive effects of military training were clearly explained.
the “white man’s burden” to serve the less-civilized members of the empire. This facet of imperialism was grounded in England’s moral obligation to assist those less fortunate.

In this discussion of the components of imperialism, it has become clear that even the most careful delineation is incapable of preventing any overlap. Each constituent viewpoint shares at least some aspects with its counterparts. However, the value of being able to distinguish between each facet allows us to dismiss previous scholarly attempts to dismiss unilaterally any sense that any single stance justified English imperialism.

While such a study of British Imperialism is valuable, our interest is to show how these various facets of imperialism shaped the culture of England’s people, particularly those who occupied the same class or station as did Sir Edward Elgar. To accomplish this, we must carefully examine the message directed at the middle class in order to understand how their perceptions of the Empire found their way into the music of Elgar.

**Propaganda and Imperialist Sentiment**

Starting around 1870, the aristocracy decided to initiate a sequence of propaganda carefully designed to create a more positive public opinion of the Empire (Porter 2004, 164). Bernard Porter challenges the notion that such propaganda accurately represented contemporary public sentiment. Quite the opposite, he proposes that the propaganda was so extensive precisely because it was ineffective in changing public perception. Because there is little evidence concerning the average individual’s reception of this propaganda, Porter’s argument is less than compelling (Porter 2004, 164).

Porter does, however, mention the integral role that music played in shaping public sentiment towards the Empire, identifying Arthur Sullivan’s “Briton’s, hold your own!” as the
first overtly, most significant piece of imperialistic music of the day (Porter 2004, 175). In fact, his opinion comes in direct contrast to his earlier judgment that there were no good works of art (including books, poetry, sculpture, etc.) from the middle of the nineteenth century that contained a significant imperial component (Porter 2004, 134). It is unclear whether he is arguing that mid-nineteenth century imperial music was of dubious quality, or that “good” music for one reason or another lacked imperialist sentiment. Nevertheless, he identifies a significant shift in the subject matter of music written after 1870 towards subjects related to imperial propaganda. As a result, it is unnecessary to ask whether Elgar, or any other citizen for that matter, bought in to the propagandist message or not. To the extent that he sought public performance of this music, Elgar increasingly composed music that resonated with contemporary English nationalism. Thus, our responsibility is to understand the message being broadcast to England about Empire in Elgar’s *Caractacus*.

John MacKenzie has outlined many of the same facets discussed above in his analysis of Imperial propaganda. He describes in great detail the exhibitions presented throughout the country to educate (indoctrinate) the British people to the glories of Imperial conflict. These exhibitions sometimes involved bringing natives from the colonies to enact their culture. Such presentations were accompanied by booklets with descriptions like the following:

Unlike the Indian, the South African native is a restless active savage, and he will be seen to be very busy grinding corn, making the native drink, working beads, and most attractive of all, particularly to the fairer sex, the manufacture of kaffir bangles, which are said to be lucky amulets (MacKenzie 1984, 104).

These exhibitions centered on the message of Social Darwinism. Their intention was to portray the depraved nature of these civilizations prior to the arrival of English influence. Such depictions promoted Britain’s responsibility to educate their new subjects about European
civilization. “In the British exhibitions, the native villages always performed one function, to show off the quaint, the savage, the exotic, to offer living proof of the onward march of imperial civilization (MacKenzie 1984, 114).” In many of these exhibitions, grass huts were enhanced to include elements of European civilization such as classical architecture.

*The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria*

In a return to what many scholars cited as the pinnacle of the British Empire, Londoners witnessed one of the greatest festivals of propaganda in 1879: the Diamond Jubilee. On the surface, this exhibition was linked to the sixtieth anniversary of the coronation of Queen Victoria; while it did not include the vignettes of native peoples found in earlier exhibitions, their “Jubilee” displayed the height of civilization the colonies had attained with the help of English rule. The *Daily Mail*, a regular newspaper known for defending the values of the Empire, published an impressive special edition dedicated to the celebration of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. Although these articles are clearly biased, they do provide a wonderful example of the type of message portrayed by pro-imperialists and deserve greater study on the way to understanding imperialist propaganda.10

An article describing the procession to St. Paul Cathedral that morning began with a detailed description of the impressive display of the British Military as they marched through the streets:

They are, these British bred colonials, splendid horsemen. And as they rode by, one detachment from one corner of the world after another detachment from another corner of the world, they were all so smart and [s]traight and strong, every man such a splendid specimen and testimony to the GREATNESS OF THE BRITISH RACE that there was not an Imperialist in the crowd who did not from the sight of them gain a new view of the glory of the British Empire. (To Saint Paul's: The Procession en Route 1897).

10 I am again deeply grateful to the Special Collections department of Brigham Young University for providing me with an original copy of this publication.
The clear message of this quote is that the greatness of the British race is exemplified in its military nature, the discipline and the strength of a soldier is evidence of their strength. Britain’s strength is further emphasized by the description of the swords worn by Queen Victoria, as part of the regalia, at her coronation: the sword of mercy, the sword of spiritual justice, and the sword of temporality (Making a Monarch: The Regalia Used in Enthroning a British Sovereign 1897). These three swords represent the virtues that an upstanding British citizen should impart to the natives of the British colonies. The theme of militarism continues in a speech outlining the wars that took place during Queen Victoria’s reign. Of course, the article begins with Queen Victoria’s declaration at her own coronation: “I pray God that my reign may be one of peace -- that war, with all its attendant horrors, may be a thing of the past (Wars of a Reign: The Victorian Battles 1897).” The article, however, continues to discuss the battles still being waged by England, emphasizing their purpose of maintaining peace in the British Empire. The message presented to the British people is that the military marching before them in the parade is a force meant to protect both England and its colonies.

The parade participants were not limited to native Britons, but included several of the battalions of the British colonies, some dressed in exotic uniforms, all marching just as smartly and majestically as the British armies:

And you began to understand, as never before, what the Empire amounts to. Not only that we possess all these remote outlandish places, and can bring men from every end of the earth to join us in honouring our Queen, but also that all these peoples are working, not simply under us, but with us -- that we send out a boy here and a boy there, and the boy takes hold of the savages of the part he comes to, and teaches them to march and shoot as he tells them, to obey him and believe in him and die for him and d the Queen. A plain, stupid, uninspired people, they call us, and yet we are doing this with every kind of savage man there is. And each one of us -- you and I, and that man in his shirt-sleeves at the corner -- is a working part of this world-shaping force. How small you must feel in face of the stupendous whole, and yet how great to be a unit in it! (At Saint Paul's: A Wondrous Sight 1897)
The concept of Social Darwinism again comes into play in the propaganda surrounding this glorious event. The Empire is no longer just about the great strength of England or the exotic nature of its colonies, but strongly vested in England’s ability to elevate these natives from their primal state and teaching them to be just as powerful, impressive, and obedient as Britons.

**Conclusion**

Despite these various facets of imperialism, the propagandistic message of the cantata is quite dominant. In the words of the Daily Mail:

> It meant that we ought to be a proud nation to-day. Proud of our fathers that founded this empire, proud of ourselves who have kept and increased it, proud of our sons, whom we can trust to keep what we hand them down and increase it for their songs in turn and their songs. Until we saw it all passing through the streets of our city we never quite realised what the Empire meant. Perhaps we do not fully realise to-day -- but we know now that it would take a lifetime's travel and study fully to realise what the British Empire is. It makes life newly worth living, worth living better and more strenuously, to feel that one is a part of this enormous, this wondrous machine, the greatest organisation the world ever saw. (The Outlook: What it Meant 1897)

The message of the Diamond Jubilee, as well as the other propaganda associated with the Empire, is that the British Empire is an achievement worthy of pride. The existence of the Empire was evidence of the greatness of the English race – a greatness that transcended militarism by including the nature and accomplishment of the British people. It is evidence that the colonies of the British Empire need to be educated and raised to become like the British people, to be trained through military efforts and education to live their lives according to the model of the Britons. John MacKenzie summarizes this idea even more succinctly:

> It is possible to identify an ideological cluster which formed out of the intellectual, national, and world-wide conditions of the later Victorian era, and which came to infuse and be propagated by every organ of British life in the period. It was made up of a renewed militarism, a devotion to royalty, an identification and worship of national heroes, together with contemporary cult of personality, and racial ideas associated with Social Darwinism. (MacKenzie 1984, 2)
Here we are able to see a few basic themes of the propaganda in England: love of country (found in devotion to royalty, hero-worship, and the English personality), militarism, and Social Darwinism. These are the themes that we will discover in the music of Edward Elgar as part of the Imperialist message of the British Empire. Many of these themes can be found in Caractacus and show more clearly the role that Elgar played in forwarding the Imperialist message.
CHAPTER THREE

“ENGLAND FOR THE ENGLISH!”: ELGAR’S IMPERIALIST SENTIMENT

Given the barrage of Imperialist Propaganda flooding Britain during Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, the logical question is how much it affected the average British citizen. Of course, they were participants in the pageantry: in reporting on the actual day of the Diamond Jubilee celebration, The Daily Mail described streets packed with citizens cheering the Queen; similarly well attended were the exhibitions on the colonies (MacKenzie 1984, 114). Less clear, however, is precisely to what extent the average citizen bought into the ideological construct of patriotism, militarism, and Social Darwinism (MacKenzie 1984, 35).

Bernard Porter suggests that the continuing barrage of propaganda was evidence that the propaganda was not having the desired effect; if so, why did the powers that be continue to promulgate it (Porter 2004, 192)?11 Porter vividly describes the plight of the working class, particularly the sometimes violent demonstrations over issues of pay and working conditions, as evidence that the average British laborer took issue with the British government. Their concerns had less to do with the Empire than with the state of their own personal affairs (Porter 2004, 196). Although Porter’s argument may apply to the working class, it does not assume that every laborer felt the same way, particularly those doing their best to rise above the class as a whole. MacKenzie would argue that Edward Elgar’s acceptance of the “ideological construct” of Imperialism, is not typical of the general working class as a whole (MacKenzie 1984, 7).

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11 Porter takes a rather sterile approach to the propaganda question, looking for both direct and specific evidence that the working class really did believe the messages that were fed them. Chapter 8 of his book describes the response of the working class to Imperialism in great detail.
Edward Elgar’s Imperialist Sentiment

Edward Elgar’s attitude toward the Imperialist construct is dynamic. As Charles McGuire has noted, Elgar tended to adjust his public persona to fit the tenor of the time (McGuire 2007b). The morphing of his personality complicates attempts to understand Elgar’s attitude toward Imperialism. Antithetical opinions appear in two letters written just one month apart:

…any nation but ours is allowed to war whoop as much as they like but I feel we are too strong to need it - I did suggest we should dabble in patriotism in the Finale, when lo! the worder (that's good!) instead of merely paddling his feet goes & gets naked & wallows in it… (Moore 1987, 76)

I knew you wd. laugh at my librettist's patriotism (& mine) never mind: England for the English is all I say - hands off! there's nothing apologetic about me. (Moore 1987, 79)

What could possibly explain such contradictory statements about patriotism from Elgar in such a short period of time? The first letter provides clues to the apologetic tone taken in writing August Jaeger, his (German) agent with Novello:

*By all means I will ask Acworth to eliminate the truculent ‘note’ in the lines: any nation but ours is allowed to war whoop as much as they like but I feel we are too strong to need it - I did suggest we should dabble in patriotism in the Finale, when lo! the worder (that's good!) instead of merely paddling his feet goes & gets naked & wallows in it: Now I don’t think he meant by [‘menial’] &c. Germany &c. more probably hill tribes & such...* (Moore 1987, 76) (italics mine).

While the middle of this paragraph is often quoted, the italicized portions are usually omitted, even though they provide an important clue about Elgar’s mindset. Elgar was responding to Jaeger’s complaint regarding some of Acworth’s words describing countries other than England, which Jaeger took to include Germany (Moore 1987, 76). Elgar was clearly downplaying his own patriotic sentiment in order not to offend his friend and publisher. Later, after a successful

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12 McGuire goes to great lengths to show that Elgar’s attitude toward Catholicism varied depending on how “Catholic” he needed to be at any given time to gain popularity with the public, to promote a particular work (such as *The Dream of Gerontius*), or to find favor with employers or commissioners. Although McGuire focuses specifically on religious sentiment, it shows that Elgar is capable of morphing his personality to fit his needs, and implies a propensity for doing the same in other fields of thought.
rehearsal of the piece, when Elgar was likely invigorated by the work and feeling a bit of pride in his own composition, and he allowed a much more patriotic tone to come forward in the second – seemingly contradictory – letter cited above.

The same seemingly contradictory remarks that occur elsewhere in Elgar’s writings and interactions with colleagues and friends have made it difficult to determine whether or not Elgar truly was an Imperialist. This ambiguity is further complicated by 1960’s scholarship that regarded Elgar’s patriotic music as a way to separate him from the anti-imperialist movement at the time (Botstein 2007, 370). McGuire points out three different directions that were taken over the past several decades:

The pejorative view of Elgar as popular and jingoistic in the 1920s and 1930s and again in the late 1980s epitomized the backlash against the damage and loss of the First World War and the advent of post-colonial studies.

One reaction to this hyper-patriotic Elgar was a vision of him rejecting imperialism as seen in such works as Michael Kennedy’s 1968 Portrait of Elgar, which ahistorically attempted to divorce Elgar from anything as authoritarian and paternalistic as Empire.

The equally problematic stance of the 'Good Empire' and Elgar as supporting and incorporating all of the seemingly chivalric, 'good' qualities of Empire was similarly a blanket statement, which grew only in the peace and Western prosperity of the late 1990s. (McGuire 2004, 215)

As early as 1935, Frank Howes tried to divorce the sensitive Elgar, the composer of the symphonies and the cello concerto from the jingoistic Elgar whose love of pageantry and militarism is evident in the “Pomp and Circumstance” marches and Caractacus (Howes 1982). Botstein, in analyzing Elgar’s many biographies, corroborates Howes’ position while arguing that scholars have tried too hard to downplay the patriotic side of Elgar. Botstein advocates accepting it as an integral part of Elgar’s personality (Botstein 2007, 370). Young’s analysis supports the dichotomy, defining the “public” and the “private” Elgar (Young 1955, 87). Young’s “public” Elgar relates most closely to Howes’ “jingoistic” Elgar, while Young’s
“private” Elgar coincides with Howes’ “sensitive” Elgar. Conversely Morris uses *Caractacus* to exemplify the coexistence of sensitive and militarist positions, an occurrence that effectively undercut the existence of two separate Elgars (Morris 1968, 49).

In recent years, J.P.E. Harper-Scott has attempted to portray Elgar as an “anti-Imperialist,” arguing that his imperialist compositions were simply the inevitable result of a young composer trying to make a living. He dismisses most of the arguments in favor of “Elgar the Imperialist” as assumptions that, considering his environment, he must have been perceived as an Imperialist:

Or is it evidence of his biography and reception - that as a friend of royalty (if he was one), heavily decorated in his lifetime and cemented into the musical Establishment (it seems), he must necessarily be viewed as a kind of musical Cecil Rhodes figure, an enthusiast for the empire whose music is tainted by association with a part of Britain's past that we find it intensely shameful to think about? (Harper-Scott 2007a, 2)

Harper-Scott argues that Imperialism was a sentiment restricted to the upper class and upper-middle classes, of which Elgar was not a member (Harper-Scott 2007b, 176). He also suggests that Elgar’s association with imperialism is merely a result of his circumstances - not his own opinions. (Harper-Scott 2007a, 27). Lastly, Harper-Scott suggests that Elgar assumed the image of an imperialist simply to “…justify his wife's faith in him in the face of her obdurate and despicable family (Harper-Scott 2007a, 30),” Harper-Scott’s explanation of Elgar’s Imperialist side is not entirely clear. If he means to suggest that Elgar scholars have not proven Elgar’s imperialism, Harper-Scott fails to provide any evidence to the contrary. On the other hand,

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13 In *Elgar Studies* (2007), Harper-Scott does an impressive job of summarizing the scholarship on Elgar and Imperialism, leaning towards the conclusion that Elgar is, in fact an “anti-imperialist.”
14 We know, however, that Elgar was intent on rising above his class, and perhaps saw Imperialism as his doorway into the upper-middle class.
15 Harper-Scott suggests that Elgar’s birth during the Indian Mutiny and the fact that he was commissioned to write works with titles that clearly imply love of Empire are the circumstances that led to the assumption that Elgar must have been an imperialist.
Harper-Scott marshals evidence that Elgar was able to put on the persona of an Imperialist to please his family, to make friends with royalty, and to fit into the political climate of the day.

**Elgar the Social Climber**

We must begin by understanding where Elgar stood in the English social strata of his day. Born the son of a laborer and (even worse) a shopkeeper, Elgar was not placed to succeed as a musician. Granted, his father’s shop was a music shop, giving Elgar opportunities to encounter a wide range of music; however, his father was still a shopkeeper and lacked the connections necessary to ensure his sons access to culture that could fund his music. Rosa Burley, a long time friend of Elgar, said it much more harshly:

> Today, when social distinction seems to be fading from existence, it is hard to understand the rigidity with which they were maintained during the reign of Queen Victoria. A glance at the pages of *Punch*, however, will show among other things that, in those years, to be born in a wrong social stratum was an almost unforgiveable offence, a sin for which there was no expiation. And if ever there was a wrong social stratum, it was that in habited by a provincial tradesman, and in this case one whose business paid so badly that his whole family had ultimately to be concentrated into the few small rooms over the shop. (Burley and Carruthers 1972, 44)

Reading such analysis of Elgar’s place in life suggests that Elgar’s deep-seated social inferiority was inevitable. This attitude manifested itself in his negative comparison to his colleagues,¹⁶ and his disproportionate reactions to bad reviews.¹⁷ This feeling of social inferiority remained a major issue for the rest of his life (Cannadine 2007, 6).

Elgar’s self-perception as a social outcast has been portrayed metaphorically in several of his early choral works. In her discussion of *The Black Knight*, Elgar’s first major work for chorus

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¹⁶ This includes the oft-told story of Elgar complaining about Sullivan taking up all of Elgar’s time in a rehearsal. Later, after arriving at the Leeds Festival and telling Sullivan about it, Sullivan apologizes profusely and says that he would have rehearsed the work himself if he had only known.

¹⁷ Bad – or even indifferent – reviews led Elgar to regularly threaten to “give up” conducting, as he mentions several times in his letters to August Jaeger.
and orchestra (McVeagh 2007, 16), McVeagh connects the acceptance of this unknown knight at the King’s court as a metaphor for Elgar’s personal quest for acceptance. Outcasts appear in nearly all of Elgar’s early choral works: the blind man in *The Light of Life* is barred – physically and socially – from interacting with the rest of society; King Olaf enters an unknown land to bring Christianity to the pagan tribe of Ironbeard, and, in *Caractacus*, Orbin is disowned by the Druids after warning Caractacus of the Arch-Druid’s false prophecy. In each case (most strongly in *The Black Knight*) the outcast’s ability to find social acceptance becomes a metaphor for Elgar’s own aspirations.

When Edward married Alice, her father felt that she had married below her station (Harper-Scott 2007a, 30). Conversely, Edward was quite happy to have married “up,” considering their marriage as much a solution to Elgar’s concerns about money and social status as an expression of love (Cannadine 2007, 2). Marrying into such a pro-Imperialist family required that Edward adjust his personality to please his wife and his father-in-law. Harper-Scott summarizes Elgar’s change quite succinctly:

Part of his reasoning in adopting the image of an imperialist, therefore, was surely to justify his wife’s faith in him in the face of her obdurate and despicable family. But it was also calculated to bring him closer to Alice - we might say that for him imperialism acted as a *marital* adhesive. (Harper-Scott 2007a, 30)

It comes as no surprise then, that several scholars perceived Elgar’s work ethic as motivated by his desire to improve his station in life. Cannadine describes Elgar as a “self-confessed lover of hierarchy, history and pageantry, who was a tireless self-promoter and eager for public recognition... (Cannadine 2007, 20)” Writing in *Music and Letters* in 1957, Donald Mitchell noted that "Elgar, as we know, aided and abetted by some tiresome friends, did everything possible to play, in life, the part of the Kiplingesque Englishman rather than the artist
(Mitchell 1982, 283)." Nor is Mitchell the first to view Elgar as the musical equivalent of Kipling. Harper-Scott cites the *Court Journal* which called Elgar the “Rudyard Kipling of the musicians,” due largely to the sycopthantic character of Caractacus’ final chorus. (Harper-Scott 2007a, 44). Mitchell writes:

But if, as I believe, Elgar's English character is partly mythical, it is also partly musical, not, to be sure, in the character of his invention, but in its identification with a climate of national belief: there was, indeed, a two-way identification, not only Elgar's convinced committal to what we may generally term 'imperial' topics - to this extent he was English of his period through and through - but the public's immediate and enthusiastic adoption of the music as the perfect vehicle for the mass expression of current national sentiment (Mitchell 1982, 283).

Although there are convoluted elements in the above commentary, Mitchell clearly believes that Elgar’s Imperial persona is strongly influenced by the Nationalist climate. This seemingly confirms that Elgar was working hard to define himself as the type of individual that the English upper class could approve of and accept.

Cannadine has written that Elgar was the “…socially ambitious self-promoter, obsessed with fame and titles and royalty, who was resolved to 'conquer' the great world, and who eventually did so with great success (Cannadine 2007, 3).” He also opines that Elgar may have married as much for social status as for love, worked to cultivate aristocratic and plutocratic friends, and courted every possible recognition, especially from the court of Queen Victoria. The same attempt to cultivate the connections necessary to achieve such recognition is found in his letters, particularly those concerned with Queen Victoria, Walter Parratt (the head of the Queen’s Music), and the Diamond Jubilee.

Elgar’s first major commission was the *Imperial March* written for the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee. In one of his earliest letters concerning the work, Elgar asks if the march is good enough
to dedicate it to the Queen,\textsuperscript{18} adding that he wants to use these lines from a poem by Sir Edwin Arnold:

\begin{quote}
So true a Sovereign Lady 
Ne’er ruled all hearts before! (Moore 1984, 43)
\end{quote}

This one letter makes it clear that Elgar hopes to parlay this piece into Royal Favor.\textsuperscript{19} Moore’s commentary points out Elgar’s conflicting emotions – wanting to become great in the eyes of his country while, at the same time, doubting his abilities:

\begin{quote}
Here emerges the Elgar that Novello and the other publishers had to deal with henceforward: aspiring to set his music and himself in the highest place on one hand; on the other, so insecure about himself that he could actually threaten to abandon composition altogether… (Moore 1984, 44)
\end{quote}

Elgar affirms his continued quest to spread the popularity of the \textit{Imperial March} (and by so doing his own) in a letter written shortly thereafter:

\begin{quote}
I suggested to Mr. Manns [conductor at the Crystal Palace] that he shd perform the Imperial March at his own (benefit) concert…If the March were played at the OPENING [sic] of the exhibition it would be well unless you have any views… (Moore 1984, 45)
\end{quote}

This letter to Jaeger is particularly telling. Prior to its premiere at the Diamond Jubilee Elgar is shopping his \textit{Imperial March} to a different conductor, Mr. Manns. Even more interesting is Elgar’s emphatic request that the march be played at the more prominent opening of the exhibition. Elgar’s actions are not unique to the \textit{Imperial March}: In another letter to Jaeger, Elgar suggests that a bound copy of \textit{King Olaf} be sent to the King of Norway. In both cases, his attempts to raise awareness of his music are clearly attempts to improve his standing at home.

\textsuperscript{18} It wasn’t until \textit{Caractacus} that Elgar was able to get approval to dedicate one of his works to Queen Victoria.

\textsuperscript{19} We also know, from letters in relation to Elgar’s request to get a dedication for \textit{Caractacus} that Elgar’s music was already often used in the Queen’s court. In a letter to Elgar, Walter Parratt says, “I hope you are aware that I use your music constantly, and the Queen likes it. (Moore, Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime 1990, 65)” He of course then asks Elgar to submit a piece as part of a tribute to the Queen, which Elgar readily accepts.
Of course, Elgar’s reasons for writing such patriotic music were not exclusively focused on upward social mobility; He also recognized a responsibility to provide music for the people:

I like to look on the composer’s vocation as the old troubadours or bards did. In those days it was no disgrace to a man to be turned on to step in front of an army and inspire the people with a song. For my own part, I know that there are a lot of people who like to celebrate events with music. To these people I have given tunes. Is that wrong? Why should I write a fugue or something which won't appeal to anyone, when the people yearn for things which can stir them? (Grimley 2007, 110)

Of course, we have to recognize that this quote represent Elgar’s attempt to project the image of a composer who is willing to cater to the popular tastes, with the expectation that this willingness should guarantee his popularity. He expresses a much more sincere desire in a letter to a Mr. Bennett: “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 too modest ambition! (Moore, Edward Elgar: Letters of a Lifetime 1990, 62)” Here, we see Elgar’s need for popularity as something that governs the personality he portrays, both musically and publicly. McGuire goes so far as to say that Elgar wanted to achieve international recognition during his lifetime and, to that end, accepted commissions for ceremonial music that other, more secure composers might have well rejected (McGuire 2004, 216).

What exactly, then, was it about Elgar’s personality that led the Court Journal to dub him “Rudyard Kipling of musicians?” Perhaps it was his support of imperialism, taken as a means to curry favor with the upper class and his utilization of the very elements that defined the “ideological construct” of imperialism – patriotism, militarism, and Social Darwinism (MacKenzie 1984, 35) – that placed Elgar squarely on the same side as much of his potential upper-crust patrons.
Samuel Langford and J.B. Priestley’s assignation of pride in the homeland as Elgar’s “true personality” was hardly an uncommon stance for contemporaries of Elgar\(^{20}\). They based their conclusion on uniquely English elements – both the “brassy pomp,” as well as the “purple-and-sepia sunset (Langford, Priestley and Cohen 2002, 162-163).” Langford’s treatment of Elgar nearly rises to romantic hero-worship:

> Here, in these works, we have known music, as music everywhere ought to be - an art indigenous, creative, serious, free, and life quickening…The consciousness that an art has grown up to maturity from the very ground on which you are treading, and is bearing its blossom and its fruit all around you, is something very different from feeling that it has been brought to you from a very long way… (Langford, Priestley and Cohen 2002, 160)

Even contemporary authors like Matthew Riley see Elgar’s regular use of pastoral scenes as evidence of his love of the English countryside and, by association, love of Britain (Riley 2007b, 47). Keller points out that while Elgar was not interested in quoting actual folk tunes in his music (as Vaughan Williams and Holst did) but the folk-like quality of his music provide another manifestation of his love of country (Keller 2007, 107). More direct is Ian Lace’s statement that Elgar viewed himself as the composer laureate, whose responsibility was to hymn the greatness of Britain (Lace 1997, 134).

Other authors identify Elgar’s fascination with militarism\(^{21}\), most often manifested in the prominence of chivalry as a topic in the texts he chose to set.\(^{22}\) McVeagh cites Elgar’s description of the *Froissart Overture* as a description of a knight’s “...loyalty to his king, pure faith to his religion, hardihood towards the enemy, and fidelity to his lady-love (McVeagh 2007,

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\(^{20}\) The commentary of Langford and Priestly, while written in the 1920’s, were published in the 2002 article of Elgar Society Journal.

\(^{21}\) It is more likely for scholars to point toward Elgar’s love of militarism and its manifestation in his music as evidence that Elgar is an imperialist at heart than to look at his love of countryside and patriotism. All three elements of the construct of imperialism must be considered when looking at Elgar’s personality.

\(^{22}\) Chivalry was a common way to smooth over the rough edges of dealing with the highly militaristic world in which the British Empire operated. Promoting the soldiers as chivalrous covered up the potentially barbaric acts they committed. (Richards 2001, 58)
Riley notes Elgar’s fascination with nobility, pointing out that Siegfried Sassoon saw it as mere posturing: “Elgar is, outwardly, a retired army officer of the conventional Victorian type. He prides himself on his conventional appearance. I have often heard him use the phrase 'A Great Gentleman' (Riley 2007a, 54).”

Finally, the principles of Social Darwinism, grounded in missionary work and the need to raise the less-fortunate to a higher state of existence, permeate Elgar’s compositions. Gould points out that Elgar composed the Crown of India’s march in 3/2 – a meter that cannot be marched to – as a suggestion that the East Indians required Britain’s help to march forward (Gould 2003, 13). A letter to Jaeger suggests that the final chorus of Caractacus refers to “hill tribes & such (Moore 1987, 76)” and that it was England who would educate and raise the “hill tribes” to a higher level of civilization.

Elgar’s love of country, fascination with militarism, and advocacy of Social Darwinism all suggest an individual who, despite his birth, desperately desired to raise himself to the level of the Imperialist Elite and felt that these personality traits were essential to such an ascent. Elgar’s expertise in creating a public image that mirrored the public expectation confirm his confidence that he could mould his musical ideas to the same end. His image of what an Imperialist should be (whether conjured up to impress his public, his Queen, or his family) was the creation of the Imperialist propaganda directed toward the working class. Is it not logical that his interaction with those individuals capable of enhancing both his social standing and his music would embody the image of one who embraces the social and political agenda?
Imperialism in Elgar’s Music

The next important issue to address is just how this “New Imperialist” attitude manifested itself in Elgar’s music of the period. Clearly, the Imperial March and The Banner of St. George embody the ideas of militarism and chivalry. Since both were commissioned by Novello in association with Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, such an assessment is hardly surprising. The Froissart Overture (1890) is also full of chivalrous notions, beginning with the quotation from Keats that introduces the work: “When Chivalry lifted her lance on high. (McVeagh 2007, 13)” Riley discusses the noble gestures in this overture, as well as in Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf, in great detail (Riley 2007a, 58).

McVeagh identifies Elgar’s Serenade for String Orchestra (written 1892) as “typical of his lyrical, pastoral music (McVeagh 2007, 15)” emblematic of the love of nature that became a metaphor for Elgar’s love of country. Moore suggests that the story of Caractacus appealed to Elgar because the hero’s love for his native land was so powerful that it moved his captor (Moore 1984, 230). No less a figure than Vaughan Williams identified Elgar’s music as thoroughly intertwined with England:

He has that peculiar kind of beauty which gives us, his fellow countrymen, a sense of something familiar - the intimate and personal beauty of our own fields and lanes; not the aloof and unsympathetic beauty of glaciers and coral reefs and tropical forests. (Vaughan Williams 1982, 266)

Social Darwinism wrapped up in the idea of missionary work is quite obvious in Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf; the main character travels to a village of Pagans to convert them to Christianity. Elgar’s oratorio, The Light of Life, has an overtly Christian theme, but the specific idea of Christ giving sight to the blind resonated with the missionary’s avowed goal of enlightening uncivilized peoples.
While such themes occur throughout Elgar’s music, particularly during the time when “New Imperialism” propaganda dominated British media, their presence in Caractacus coincides with Elgar’s first success in securing permission for a dedication to Queen Victoria. The presence of Imperialism as an ideological construct throughout the work makes its final chorus more congruous than Michael Kennedy and others have argued (Kennedy 2004, 56).

The remaining chapters will explore how Elgar incorporates Imperialistic themes throughout Caractacus. This analysis will show that Elgar consciously cultivated militarist, patriotic, and socially activist ideas in both the work’s text and music. By outlining these themes, Elgar made the assumption that such qualities were present in all Englishmen, even those of earlier centuries. Indeed, the entire cantata (not just its final chorus) is a paean to the English sense of manifest destiny that prevailed at that time.
CHAPTER FOUR

FINDING MEANING IN CARACTACUS

The prospect of decoding explicit extra-musical meanings in Caractacus is daunting. While this process is more easily and convincingly done with regards to written text (either as words from a musical setting or as inscriptions in the score), it is nearly impossible for any two listeners to come up with the same understanding of what the music may mean at any given moment. In his discussion on finding meaning in music, Gary Tomlinson suggests that this task is more a process than a conclusion, relieving the onus on any one person to devise a definitive interpretation:

Our arrivals at meaning and at value are momentary pauses in the ongoing dialogue with others from which meaning and value spring; they can only turn into full stops if this interpretive dialogue ends. (Tomlinson 1993, 20)

Any interpreter, however, must accept that his/her contribution to the dialogue is only valid for the brief moment before it engages with other opinions and morphs into a new, more complex understanding.

While a musical performer may work tirelessly to arrive at an interpretation fully grounded in past research – studying earlier analyses of the work, going back to primary sources, and seeking a historical context by which to measure the work - any interpretation inevitably reflects that individual’s persona at any given moment in time: “Interpretation is a process in which our preconceptions and prejudices evolve in reciprocal interaction with the data or text we consider. (Tomlinson 1993, 20)”

Tomlinson views individual artistic judgments as a dialectic process that inevitably begins with our personal intuitive responses, and evolves as the result of feedback received from audiences, colleagues, and critics, not to mention those changes that occur when we return to a work after
other preoccupations. In this study of *Caractacus*, the clear cultural difference between present and past reality initially forms a considerable hindrance to objective analogies. Historical notions of Empire and nationalism vary considerably from the author’s personal perspective, complicating any attempt to find a “deeper meaning” within the music that is unencumbered by either the personal history or the sentiments of Elgar’s time. We must do our best to understand the culture from which the music sprang, as Lawrence Kramer puts it, as well as the personality and opinions of the composer at the time of its creation.

Critical historicism, avoiding all notions of progress or development, proposes that texts are produced within a network of social, intellectual, and material conditions that strongly, though often implicitly, affect meaning. (Kramer 1990, xii)

The first two chapters of this dissertation have clarified the complex set of cultural conditions that influenced Elgar’s textual and musical choices; only by having undertaken this task can we come to a clearer understanding of meaning in his music. The dialogue between historical perspectives regarding Empire and imperialism and contemporary notions of those same states of identity serve to minimize any prejudice from the conversation.

While the study of cultural and social conditions ensures an interpretation of meaning that is closer to that of Elgar or the average Englishman of his time, any attempt to state with certainty what Elgar intended as he composed the work is fraught with problems. To come anywhere close to his intentions, we must find clues, “windows of understanding” that will bring us closer to his understanding of the work. These “windows” take the form of textual analysis, referential citations, structural tropes, mimesis, and compositional methods.

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23 The concept of the “windows of understanding” is an idea presented by Lawrence Kramer that there are clues that one can find in the music, both texted and untexted, that will present us with a path to understanding the significance of the music. The first three windows are presented by Kramer (Kramer 1990, 9), while the fourth window is presented by Harper-Scott (Harper-Scott, Edward Elgar, Modernist 2006, 170), the fifth is the author’s own.
**Textual Analysis**

According to Kramer, textual windows are not limited to lyrics or titles, but can also include “epigrams, programs, notes to the score, and sometimes even expression markings.” (Kramer 1990, 9) He would suggest that Elgar’s regular use of the marking *nobilmente* in several of his works provides a significant clue to understanding his meaning. Looking specifically at Elgar’s *Caractacus*, we must consider the links between the libretto and the expressive markings and few staging directions included in the score. We must also acknowledge several of Elgar’s annotations to a vocal score given to Herbert Thompson (Rushton 2012b). In addition to labeling the leitmotivs that appear throughout the work, Elgar writes several descriptive sentences explaining some of his musical choices. This includes messages like the one inscribed at the beginning of the fourth scene: “all forest sounds (written in our own woods) which I hope you will see someday” (Rushton 2012a).

Questions regarding the use of the libretto as a key to Elgar’s intentions in the work have been regularly discussed. While it is fair to say that much of the libretto consists of Acworth’s ideas about Empire and British history, there is significant evidence that Elgar had an influential role on the shaping of the libretto. Foremost, in this regard, is Elgar’s letter to August Jaeger, in which he explains that he had suggested that Acworth dabble in some patriotism (Moore 1987, 76), as well as Moore’s own discussion of Elgar’s involvement in the libretto. Moore suggests that small changes being regularly made to the libretto were evidence of Elgar’s involvement in making sure the text said things his way. Moore also points out that the text of the final libretto for scenes I, II, and IV did not go to the publisher until after the music had been

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24 McGuire writes an impressive article discussing the role of the druids in British Nationalism – linking them in particular to Acworth’s study of the Druids as well as his translation of the Celtic Poetry (Ballads of Marathas) that influenced his libretto for Caractacus (McGuire, Elgar and Acworth’s Caractacus: the Druids, race, and the individual hero 2007a).
set – more evidence that Elgar was clearly crafting a text that expressed his thoughts accurately (Moore 1987, 71). From these explanations we can surmise that Elgar was involved in tweaking the text (likely in more areas than are evident in his letters); thus, the libretto a primary piece of evidence in helping one understand Elgar’s intentions regarding the meaning of Caractacus. In addition, the libretto given at the head of the vocal score includes passages that Elgar chose not to set, such as some of the verses eliminated from Caractacus’ aria in scene four (to be discussed in chapter six). These textual omissions indicate topics that Elgar wanted to eliminate from the work. Each of these clues will help open the textual window of understanding and bring us closer to Elgar’s intention for the meaning of the text.

**Referential Citations**

Lawrence Kramer argues that citational inclusions provide clues to musical meaning in the form of references (literature or otherwise) to non-musical works:

> [Citational inclusions] includes titles that link a work of music with a literary work, visual image, place, or historical moment; musical allusions to other compositions; allusions to texts through the quotation of associated music; allusions to the styles of other composers or of earlier periods; and the inclusion (or parody) of other characteristic styles not predominant in the work at hand. (Kramer 1990, 9)

In Elgar’s Caractacus, the most common type of such citations are musical. In fact, Elgar has a history of citing earlier compositions, especially in “The Music Makers” where Elgar quotes several of his past compositions (including The Dream of Gerontius and the Enigma Variations) in the cantata. We expect to hear particular rhythms or melodies from his earlier works – the reappearance of dotted rhythms in his Imperial March in Caractacus are concrete expressions of an Imperialist sentiment. In addition, we hear musical references to Wagner and Sullivan in
Caractacus. A deeper look at potential connections between Elgar’s themes and those of Wagner and Sullivan, especially in finding specific connections between themes, shed new light on Elgar’s intentions with particular musical effects.

**Structural Considerations**

Kramer defines structural tropes as structural procedures “…that function as a typical expressive act in the culture.” (Kramer 1990, 9) These are not limited to the traditional definitions of musical structure (such as sonata form, for example) but include other types of communication such as key relationships. Elgar’s modulation from E-flat major to G major at the moment of Orbin’s conversion to a heroic character is musically and affectively significant.

Elgar’s formal constructions in *Caractacus* do show the presence of concrete musical forms. Julian Rushton suggest that *Caractacus* closely resembles opera (specifically, Rushton notes the formal parallels between *Caractacus* and Weber’s *Der Freischütz*), noting the resemblance of portions of *Caractacus*, to standard aria and duet structures. Rushton also notes the similarity of the triumphant march that opens the sixth scene of *Caractacus* to the formal structure of Elgar’s *Pomp and Circumstance* marches. (Rushton 2012b)

Herbert Thompson, in his analysis of the work for the program notes at the Leeds premiere, suggests that:

Mr. Elgar’s music is not the kind that bears formal analysis. For the most part it follows the course of the text with a closeness that precludes the employment of absolute musical forms. (Rushton 2012b)

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25 The reference to Sullivan most strongly relates to the text and the setting at the beginning of the third scene, as a prelude to Eigen and Orbin’s last meeting before the battle (Holloway 2004, 76). These connections seem to have a strong association with Elgar’s attempts to bring a sense of “Englishness” in this scene. The most common connection to Wagner is Elgar’s use of leitmotivs throughout the work (Moore 1987, 235).
Instead, Thompson dedicates the bulk of his analysis to identifying the various representative themes, or leitmotivs that appear throughout the work. Thompson’s source for many of these themes is a vocal score provided to him by Elgar. In that score, Elgar identified no less than forty different leitmotivs, prompting Rushton to suggest that Thompson was so overtaken by the themes that he couldn’t see the larger musical forms present in the work. Nevertheless, Elgar’s recognition of these themes provides clues to the unfolding musical structure of *Caractacus*. A selection of the most repeated themes and their appearances throughout the score are identified in the table below. The significance of these themes and their appearances are discussed throughout the subsequent chapters. (Rushton 2012b)

*Table 4-1: Selected Leitmotivs* (Rushton 2012a)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme Name</th>
<th>Musical Example</th>
<th>Occurrences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Connective Martial Material | ![Example](image) | Scene 1, Measure 3  
Scene 6, Rehearsal 50 |
| British Soldiers    | ![Example](image) | Scene 1, Rehearsal 17  
Scene 2, Rehearsal 18  
Scene 3, Rehearsal 18  
Scene 6, Rehearsal 29  
Scene 6, Rehearsal 50 |
| Watchmen’s Call     | ![Example](image) | Scene 1, Rehearsal 4  
(found throughout scene 1)  
Scene 6, Rehearsal 53-5 |
| Rome                | ![Example](image) | Scene 1, Rehearsal 4-5  
Scene 1, Rehearsal 8-5  
Scene 2, Rehearsal 24-3  
Scene 4, Rehearsal 8-10  
Scene 4, Rehearsal 15 (augmented)  
Scene 6 (throughout the procession)  
Scene 6, Rehearsal 42  
Scene 6, Rehearsal 52 |

26 I am grateful to Julian Rushton for sharing with me his transcription of Elgar’s annotations in the vocal score given to Herbert Thompson, which I used to develop this table. A complete version of Rushton’s table is included in the appendix.
Table 4-1 continued: Selected Leitmotivs (Rushton 2012a)

| Britain | Scene 1, Rehearsal 4-7  
|         | Scene 1, Rehearsal 16-2  
|         | Scene 1, Rehearsal 31-2  
|         | Scene 1, Rehearsal 32  
|         | Scene 1, Rehearsal 52 (modified)  
|         | Scene 2, Rehearsal 23  
|         | Scene 5, Rehearsal 5  
|         | Scene 6, Rehearsal 29-3  
|         | Scene 6, Rehearsal 32-3  
|         | Scene 6, Rehearsal 54 (Modern Britain)  
|         | Scene 6, Rehearsal 57  
|         | Scene 6, Rehearsal 61-2  
| Orbin | Scene 1, Rehearsal 33-20  
|        | Scene 2, Rehearsal 12  
|        | Scene 2, Rehearsal 35  
|        | Scene 2, Rehearsal 44 (transformed)  
|        | Scene 2, Rehearsal 58 (augmented)  
| Prophecy | Scene 1, Rehearsal 42-3  
|         | Scene 5, Rehearsal 1  
| Taranais | Scene 1, Rehearsal 43  
|        | Scene 2, Rehearsal 8-5  
|        | Scene 2, Rehearsal 10  
| Orbin’s Exaltation | Scene 2, Rehearsal 36-2  
|         | Scene 2, Rehearsal 46-3  
|         | Scene 2, Rehearsal 51  
|         | Scene 2, Rehearsal 55-9  
|         | Scene 3, Rehearsal 18-9  

**Mimesis**

The mimetic window was not introduced by Kramer in his original presentation of the windows of understanding, but was added by Harper-Scott in his discussion of several of Elgar’s later works (Harper-Scott 2006). The idea of a mimetic window is grounded in the idea that music, unlike any other form of art, has the ability to mimic the nature of humanity and draw a deeper understanding of human nature. This mimetic nature, according to Harper-Scott, is tied to the idea that music can take on a human presence and thus give meaning to human interaction that other artwork cannot. He says:
Art is not merely the reproduction of the thing that is represented: it is the appearing of an aspect of reality in the thing that is represented. Art reveals aspects of things which cannot otherwise be discovered… (Harper-Scott 2006, 43)

Other scholars have made note of this particular window, pointing out that some of Elgar’s gestures can make specific reference to various emotions or moods. Riley identifies several musical gestures in several of Elgar’s early works – focusing particularly on the Froissart Overture – that symbolize nobility (Riley 2007a, 58). The majority of the gestures seem to identify the “noble” gesture of the highly ornate bows made by monarchs. Of course, the music, or even the instrumentalist, is not actually bowing, but the musical shape of the line seems to portray a bow.

Elgar uses similar themes to imitate the sounds of the British woodlands. At the beginning of scene four, in his vocal score given to Herbert Thompson, Elgar writes: “all forest sounds (written in our own woods) which I hope you will see someday.” He also writes at the beginning of scene five that the opening theme is intended to represent the Severn (Rushton 2012a). In both cases, Elgar musically mimics the sounds of the woodlands and the river in the orchestral score. Such imitations, especially when identified by Elgar as such, are significant.

This example is, of course, much more overt than the aspects of human personality and character to which Harper-Scott refers, nonetheless it does provide a concrete example of the ways in which music can quite clearly portray things that are extra musical. An example of this “psychological” mimesis is shown by Elgar in the final scene of Caractacaus as the Welsh Captain speaks out for his country’s freedom. Even in his letter to Jaeger, Elgar notes his own emphasis on the word “woodlands.” By having Caractacus stop (and even having the music stop) and repeat the word, Elgar expresses that Caractacus’ emotions about losing his homeland (Moore 1987, 238). The music mimics human emotion in such a way that the character’s
emotion is evident in the music. This type of window to understanding meaning is much more
difficult to justify and discover, but, when corroborated by other windows, the meaning of the
mimetic nature of the music becomes quite clear.

Compositional Methods

While they are certainly not structural, Elgar uses other compositional choices to infuse
the cantata with meaning. These choices, and the texts which may have influenced them, merit
consideration as a window to understand the musical meaning of Caractacus. Kramer refers to
“style, rhetoric, representation, and so on” inferring that any musical element that has symbolic
meaning can become a means of interpreting the music. In this case, these elements include
instrumentation, key choices, and melodic styles. To understand the possible meanings of Elgar’s
choices in these matters, we must look at some of the texts that Elgar read as he learned music
for keys to the meaning of his musical structures. Primarily we will look at Pauer’s The Elements
of the Beautiful in Music and Berlioz’s treatise on instrumentation.27

Pauer’s The Elements of the Beautiful in Music

As part of a series of publications on music edited by John Stainer and Hubert Parry,
Ernst Pauer’s The Elements of the Beautiful in Music outlines those elements that contribute to a
beautiful work, suggesting that when a piece of work is truly beautiful, “…the intellect does not
feel the necessity of analysis; the hearer's sympathy is aroused and maintained by the excellence
of the composition. (Pauer 1877, 11)” Despite this idealistic concept, intellectual analysis forms
the majority of Pauer’s text. In his second chapter, Pauer outlines several of the elements of

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27 Byron Adams suggests that Elgar would have read both Pauer’s and Berlioz’s texts as they are both present and
annotated in his library at the Birthplace Museum (Adams 2007, 79).
music that lead to particular characteristics or emotions. This includes aspects like the high notes versus low notes suggesting that:

…the high notes generally express the more lively and the brighter emotions of the soul; yet these higher notes may also portray anxiety, and even despair; whilst the lower notes express solemnity, calmness, dignity, and earnestness, a certain resignation, and an intense though chastened grief. (Pauer 1877, 19)

Such an application of these topics can be seen in Caractacus’ arias. He sings in his lower range at the beginning of the aria “The air is sweet, the sky is calm…” to express calmness and dignity and sings in a higher range as he describes his battles to express anxiety and later despair. Pauer also discusses the affects of the various meters, intervals, and chromatic versus diatonic passages. Pauer provides his most detailed discussion of the affects of the different keys, saying:

We may take it for granted that every key has, to a certain extent, its particular domain, in which it reigns with a decided supremacy, and in which it satisfactorily expresses its individual character. (Pauer 1877, 21)

This essay is followed by a discussion of each of the 24 major and minor keys, even discussing the difference between the keys of G-flat and F-sharp. His analysis includes such things as describing the key of C-major (the key of the “Watchmen, alert!” fanfare in the opening scene of Caractacus) as “pure, certain, decisive, and … powerful resolve. (Pauer 1877, 23)” As further evidence of the likelihood that Elgar was aware of Pauer’s key definitions, Caractacus’ ballad in the first scene (rehearsal 21) begins in E-flat major: “serious, solemn, and dignified” according to Pauer (Pauer 1877, 25). As Caractacus’ aria develops into a passionate description of his military efforts, the key shifts to F minor (rehearsal 25), a key described by Pauer as full of melancholy, rising to passion (Pauer 1877, 25). Finally, Caractacus’ realization that his rally is coming to an end shifts dramatically into D minor (rehearsal 29), described by Pauer as full of melancholy and grief (Pauer 1877, 23). The same pattern of Pauer’s meanings clearly connected to the text and the sentiment of the moment runs throughout the cantata and will be a significant
clue to the meaning Elgar intended. In addition to his summary of keys, Pauer also includes the meanings’ of particular intervals and meters which will be considered while interpreting the cantata.

*Berlioz’s Treatise on Instrumentation*

As an autodidact\(^{28}\), Elgar must have been intrigued as he read Berlioz’s *Treatise on Instrumentation*. The book outlines the different methods for employing the various instruments of the orchestra and how to best write for each of them. Perhaps most interesting to the discussion of meaning in Elgar’s works, Berlioz goes into great detail to describe the emotional affect of the different instruments in particular ranges. For example, he describes the flute as an instrument able to give the expression of “desolation to a sad melody (Berlioz 1948, 227)” such as it is used in the third scene of *Caractacus* to highlight the sadness of the two departing lovers: Eigen and Orbin.

Both of these books are tools useful in identifying the structural tropes of Elgar’s time, i.e. how the expressive implication of key, meter, and instrumentation enlighten any particular passage of music, and, by extension, its contribution to an understanding of the larger work as a whole.

There are many clues provided to us by studying the textual indications and the annotations that Elgar makes on the score, understanding the significance of the various structural tropes such as his extensive use of a leitmotiv structure, studying the ways in which Elgar mimicked nature and human emotion, and researching the books that Elgar read and influenced his choices of key and instrumentation. Upon studying these clues, we are provided

\(^{28}\) Adams article (Adams 2007) identifies Elgar as an autodidact – an individual who is particularly skilled at teaching himself through reading and otherwise. Adams cites Elgar’s voracious reading habits as evidence.
with keys necessary to temper our own prejudices regarding the British Empire and coming to a
closer understanding of Elgar’s intended meaning in Caractacus.

Even with such a codified approach to try and remove one’s individual prejudices, it is
inevitable that they will be present. Thus, this analysis of the meanings of Elgar’s Caractacus
cannot be regarded as definitive, but simply as an approach to meaning that does its best to take
into account historical context and hermeneutic windows of understanding to provide a new
angle to understanding Elgar’s Imperialist intentions behind Caractacus.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE WOODLANDS: ELGAR’S LOVE OF COUNTRY AND COUNTRYSIDE

Love of country is central to British Imperialism. To be able to stand behind a movement that projects its lifestyle onto cultures across the world, a citizen generally has a deep love for his country. With love of country comes love of those who made that country great, a sentiment echoed by J. Lawson Walton: “The imperialist feels a profound pride in the magnificent heritage of empire won by the courage and energy of his ancestry… (Porter, The Lion's Share: A Short History of British Imperialism 1850 - 1995 1996, 137)” A similar pride in Englishness permeates The Daily Mail’s reporting of the pageantry of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee; references abound to the “greatness of the British race (To Saint Paul's: The Procession en Route 1897)” and the vastness and greatness of that Empire which produces pride to be a part of such a “wondrous machine (The Outlook: What it Meant 1897).”

In his music, Elgar also expressed the same love of country. This is particularly evident by his pervasive use of the “Britain” theme throughout the work, as well as the several themes associated with the British soldiers. Percy Young stated that Elgar was “…firmly convinced that the Monarchy and the Empire were both admirable and necessary” (Young 1955). Elgar’s oft-quoted opinion “England for the English,” was written in response to Jaeger’s criticism of the final chorus of Caractacus.

J.P.E. Harper-Scott has argued that Elgar’s love of country was inspired by less honorable motives:

Elgar was too ignorant of politics and too ill-trained by his background to think very deeply about empire, though he unquestionably found its showy display and the (rather abstract) idea of Britain's majesty attractive. (Harper-Scott 2007a, 43)
Although much of Elgar’s overtly imperialistic music clearly falls in line with Harper-Scott’s “showy display” – the Imperial March, The Pageant of Empire, and even The Banner of St. George – other aspects of Elgar’s patriotism suggest that there is much more to it than pageantry for its own sake. Elgar also expressed his love of country through references to the beauty of the English countryside. This particular brand of patriotism especially colors Caractacus.

**Love of Country and Countryside**

In writing about Caractacus’ plea to Emperor Claudius in the cantata’s fifth scene, Elgar tells Jaeger that “I made old Caractacus stop as if broken down on p. 168 & choke & say ‘woodlands’ again because I am so madly devoted to my woods (Moore 1987, 43).” Elgar’s professed love of the English woodlands provides the pictorial background of the cantata. More importantly, Elgar’s love of nature served as an important aspect of his patriotic feelings much like Caractacus’ love of the English countryside was tightly intertwined with his zeal in defending his country.

Elgar’s depictions of the countryside are hardly unique to Caractacus. Diana McVeagh describes the Serenade for Strings, op. 20 as pastoral. She also cites Elgar’s tempo markings (piacevole) as evidence that this music portrays the pastoral (McVeagh 2007, 15). Vaughan Williams, a recognized lover of nationalist (and naturalist) music, describes Elgar’s music this way:

> He has that peculiar kind of beauty which gives us, his fellow countrymen, a sense of something familiar - the intimate and personal beauty of our own fields and lanes; not the aloof and unsympathetic beauty of glaciers and coral reefs and tropical forests (Vaughan Williams 1982, 266).
Vaughan Williams suggests that Elgar’s music goes far beyond the non-specific naturalist composer whose works are replete with portrayals of stereotypical pastoral scenes. Instead, Elgar portrays images that are unique to England as a way to highlight England.

Elgar’s interviews and letters are replete with expressions of his love for country and countryside. To his friend, Sir Sidney Colvin, Elgar wrote: “I am still at heart the dreamy child who used to be found in the reeds by the Severn side with a sheet of paper trying to fix the sounds… (Riley 2002, 157)” Again, in an interview given in 1896, Elgar says:

My idea is that there is music in the air, music all around us, and (here he raised his hands, and made a rapid gesture of capture) – you – simply – simply – take as much as you require! (Harper-Scott 2007a, 36)

Burley has recounted how Elgar walked the grounds at the Malvern, even following the Druid path from end to end in preparation for writing Caractacus (Moore 1984, 232).

Elgar’s regular depictions of the English countryside, as well as his expressed love for nature are ways that he expresses his love for his country. In much the same way that nationalist composers like Bedrich Smetena portrayed patriotic sentiment by depicting the scenes along the Vltava, Elgar expressed love of his country by praising of the beauty of the British landscape. In Caractacus, Elgar expresses his love of nature (and, by extension, love of country) in two different ways: First, he includes pastoral scenes and musical imitations of natural elements (particularly in the “Woodland Interlude” at the beginning of Scene III of the cantata); second, he composes melodies and sets texts that evoke the character of the English folksong.

**The Pastoral**

Textually, the blending of nature and patriotism pervades the libretto. In the first scene, the English warriors express awareness of the Roman forces off their coast, who “invaded their
rivers, and wasted their woodlands,” allowing the coast and woodlands to represent their country. These words are set to Elgar’s “desolation” theme in the aria, enhancing the Britons concern for their homeland. In his first aria (Scene I, Rehearsal 21), Caractacus speaks in pastoral images such as “The air is sweet, the sky is calm, all nature round is breathing balm” as a means to draw courage for the next day’s battle. Even while lamenting the fate of the captive Britons, the fifth scene expresses more concern that they will never see their British land than concern over the potential punishment for their rebellion: “They shall ne’er return again…For they never more shall see British heav’n, or land, or thee.”

During the first scene, Elgar introduces a theme that he refers to as the “mistletoe theme,” (later referring to it as the “oak theme”). Even in its first appearance (Scene 1, Rehearsal 40-9) Elgar states in the score given to Thompson that it will be further developed in the second scene (see fig 5.1). For Elgar, this theme, symbolizing the British Empire, naturally links with the words of the final chorus: “The oak has grown and shadow’d The shores of all the world.” The theme appears at least once in every scene, as well as during the final chorus. In fact, it is plausible to submit that the “Modern Britain” theme that immediately follows is derived from it (see fig 5.2), strengthening the connection between the woodlands and Britain for Elgar.

Figure 5.1: Mistletoe/Oak Theme (Scene 2, Rehearsal 3)
Of all of the cantata’s characters, Eigen seems to have the closest association with the English countryside. Her primary scenes in the cantata involve waiting for Orbin in the woods, or recounting her woodland meetings with a Druid Maiden. Perhaps her association with nature explains the prominence of 12/8 meter for her scenes, given the long association of that meter with pastoral music. In addition, the text of her major “aria” at the beginning of the third scene abounds in nature pictures: “The gentle wind with kisses playing,” “The fawn is leaping round the hind,” and “The dove is cooing,” etc.

The harmonic elements of this aria also effectively portray the English countryside. It opens in G-Major, a key Pauer describes as a pastoral key and evocative of youth and calm meditation (Pauer 1877, 21), the key has also been associated with pastoral music in Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, Op. 68 and F.J. Haydn’s oratorio, The Seasons and Missa Sancti Nicolai. The elements of youth and meditation are clearly prompts for the pastoral scene that Elgar composes. His musical depiction of the pastoral notably lacks any significant presence of dominant-tonic relationships, emphasizing chords that are somewhat removed harmonically this defining polarity of tonal music. Eigen’s first entrance over the subdominant heralds the emergence of Elgar’s “natural” harmonic language. Her second phrase (see Fig. 5.3) lacks any dominant-tonic cadences; the first opportunity for an authentic cadence is avoided by Elgar’s use of a deceptive

29 The association of 12/8 with pastoral themes in general and Beethoven’s Pastoral Symphony in particular are both found in Pauer’s The Beautiful in Music. Since Elgar probably owned Pauer’s text, his selection of the meter can safely be considered such a reference. Of course, this association was present as early as the Baroque period.
cadence. The next phrase begins with a typical cadential progression (I → IV → V); but again Elgar avoids tonal expectation by returning to the subdominant on the downbeat of the cadential measure, arriving on the tonic shortly after - on the weakest possible part of the beat and measure. The lack of harmonic function is underscored by a G pedal present throughout these few measures of the work. This replacement of traditional harmonic progressions helps to create the sense of timelessness that characterizes the depiction of the English countryside.

Beyond Elgar’s use of harmony to evoke the mood of timelessness associated with England, the melodies that Elgar writes for this scene mimic sights and sensations associated with woodlands. Any discussion of pastoral themes in Elgar’s music must include Matthew Riley’s discussion of the subject (Riley 2002). While acknowledging that Elgar tried his best to distance himself from other English “pastoral” composers, Riley affirms the nearly universal feeling that Elgar’s music evokes the English countryside. Riley summarizes Elgar’s pastoral allusions within three thematic categories: references to Pan – mythology’s anthropomorphic representation of nature and his reed pipe, portrayals of the sounds of wind in the woodlands, and instrumental mimesis of the Aeolian harp. While Riley highlights many examples found
throughout Elgar’s orchestral music, these do not appear categorically in *Caractacus*. What then, are the “pastoral” representations in this work?

In many cases, a melody does not mimic any particular element of the text, but seems to recreate the general aura of an outdoor scene. The lilting rhythms of the compound meter (see Fig 5.3) contribute greatly to this effect. In addition, sequential themes, like Fig 5.5 (rehearsal 12), combine with their rhythm to suggest a carefree afternoon among the oak woodlands. The dotted eighths-sixteenth rhythms create the sensation of the dancing and leaping woodland creatures, while the theme, which ascends from low strings to high, heightens this effect. Despite its 12/8 meter, the long, sustained notes of Eigen’s theme at “my heart is bright as the morning light” (see Fig 5.4) contrast the lilting orchestra rhythm. The dotted quarter notes of Eigen’s melodies, doubled by the clarinet, soar over the lilting rhythm of the violins to create the sense of grandeur evoked by the open air and the vast woodlands. Despite the next section’s change to common time, Elgar retains the dotted-eighth-sixteenth themes implying the continuation of compound meter (see Fig 5.6).

In addition, these melodies are played primarily by woodwinds – clarinet, oboe, and flute – all reminiscent of Pan’s flute, another naturalist reference. Riley describes Elgar’s use of Pan’s flute in detail (Riley 2002, 157), suggest that his choice of woodwinds makes passing reference to Pan’s reed pipes. Although the particular melody is not reminiscent of that played by the pipes, the color of the woodwinds is easily associated with the character. Berlioz, while associating the woodwinds with themes of tenderness and innocence, associates the clarinet in particular with the women who are watching the warriors as they go to battle (Berlioz 1948). It comes as no surprise, in this case, that the clarinet is used so often in association with Eigen.
In addition to consideration of how meter and orchestration evoke a pastoral quality, we know that Elgar consciously wrote themes to recreate the pastoral images of the text. Elgar’s annotations on the vocal score given to Herbert Thompson show his intent: “All forest sounds (written in our own woods) which I hope you will see someday.” This is not the first time that
Elgar makes reference to mimetic representations of pastoral themes. Above the first measures of scene five, Elgar wrote “the rolling stream of Habren (Severn). I made this on the banks of its [sic].” During Caractacus’ aria in the middle of scene six (rehearsal 28-5), Elgar writes “He breaks down & chokes thinking of his woods,” adding at the foot of the same page “As I do when I’m away from Birchwood!” Such commentary strengthens the opinion that Elgar attempted to mimic specific woodland sounds that appear in the text (Rushton 2012a)

In the next section of this aria, three distinct themes distinctly mimic the nature elements of the text. The first theme, played by the violas, consists of ascending and descending sixteenth-note passages with periodic chromatic inflections (see Fig 5.7). These rapidly-moving lines are possibly an allusion to the Aeolian harp, an instrument that Riley describes as “played” by the wind that sets the strings vibrating. As the speed of the wind changes, the pitches rise and fall. The rapidly rising and descending lines in the strings make them seem as if there are unseen breezes generating their melodies (Riley 2007a, 169). This gesture echoes Eigen’s words: “The gentle wind with kisses kind is playing on my brow.” Elgar passes this melodic motive between the upper strings throughout this segment, another potential metaphor for the capricious melody generated by the breeze.

Figure 5.7: Scene III, Rehearsal 13-3, “The gentle wind with kisses kind is playing”
The second theme occurs in anticipation of Eigen’s text “The fawn is leaping round the hind.” (see Fig. 5.6). The dotted, anapestic figure passed from clarinet to flute to oboe, arguably portrays the fawn leaping through the woodland grove. The segment’s final theme (Fig 5.8) features another exchange between flutes and first violins; their D-Lydian sixteenth-note gestures mimic the motion of the “wind” theme, but lack its breadth and whimsy. The clarinet’s subdued echo might reflect the textual image of “The dove is cooing to her mate” (Fig 5.8). Interestingly, Elgar uses this same theme during scene six (rehearsal 28) to recall the imagery of the British countryside while Caractacus sings of the freedom of the Britons under his rule.

These themes closely resemble ones found in the scene’s overture – entitled the “Woodland Interlude” – that Harper-Scott describes as “…the brand of patriotism Elgar was most deeply interested in: a patriotism of green lanes, little river, and hills one can get up and down in the afternoon.” (Harper-Scott 2007a, 43) Since the “Woodland Interlude” was written after the third scene (including Eigen’s aria) was completed (Moore 1987), Elgar used instrumental themes associated with the aria as the basis for the Interlude to retroactively create formal cohesiveness between the two.

Transferred to the “Woodland Interlude,” this thematic interchange becomes a surprisingly realistic woodland picture, where the wind hardly stops, where a fawn is seen
periodically leaping through the woods, and where, at the right time, one can hear a dove cooing from a distance. In addition, Elgar’s instrumentation seems apt for each image – the clarinet imitating the dove, the strings an Aeolian Harp, the oboe a nimble fawn.

The preceding recital of harmonic, metric, and melodic elements identified in the previous pages represent Elgar’s mimesis of the countryside he loved. Refering to these passages, Elgar said: “This is what I hear all day – the trees are singing my music – or have I sung theirs?” (Riley 2002, 156) These examples suggest that Elgar musically recreated the natural world in his music, emphasizing the English countryside as his particular way of showing his love for England, feelings that while patriotic, are not necessarily jingoistic. As these elements combine in the “Woodland Interlude,” we understand Harper-Scott’s assertion that Elgar’s patriotism took the form of natural images. Is this, however, the only way that Elgar depicted the countryside or extolled elements he regarded as uniquely English?

The Folk Song and “Englishness”

Jeffrey Richards quotes an editorial that appeared in the January, 1887 issue of The Musical Times as a landmark in making the case for nationalism in English music. Alluding to the national musical movement achieved by Germany and similar movements among the Slavs and the Irish, the author of that editorial wrote:

The roots of national music…lie deep down in the nature of the people to whom it belongs…Each country, recognizing its own nature in its own music, should cultivate the art for itself, [and] seize upon whatever is most distinctive and valuable in its own conception and expression… (Richards 2001, 11)

This closely echoes Vaughan Williams’ opinion that Elgar’s music provided English audiences with a sense of their own fields and lanes (Vaughan Williams 1982, 266). Citing the Irish and Hungarian use of folk songs, The Musical Times editorial suggests that English folk
songs, similarly used, might help foster a national musical identity. C. Hubert H. Parry, an
advocate of folk song as representative of the English temperament, concurred with this notion:

[English folk tunes] are characteristic of the race, of the quiet reticence of our country
folk, courageous and content, ready to meet what chance shall bring with a cheery heart. All the things that make the folk-music of the race also betoken the qualities of the race, and, as a faithful reflection of ourselves, we needs must cherish it… (Boyes 1993, 25)

The English folk song does, in fact, personify the English people and countryside. If any music were capable of unifying the English nation by infusing its newest members with pride in their homeland, surely it would be the English folk song. As Georgina Boyes puts it, “Morris dancers, maypoles on the village green and orchestrated folk songs have been used to represent – and sell – ‘Englishness’ throughout the world.” (Boyes 1993, 2)

To discover Elgar’s use of folksong in Caractacus, we must first define the qualities commonly found in English folksong. In the above mentioned editorial on England’s national music, the melodies of English folk songs were described as:

…simply constructed, of a manly and straightforward character, emphasized by definite, well-marked rhythm and regularity of phrase; and they combine strength and tenderness to a degree approached by no other national airs… (Richards 2001, 11)

These traits are clearly visible in many folk songs: a simple construction based on basic, predictable harmonic progressions, well-marked and simple rhythms, and regular phrase structure. Merely looking at a traditional English melody (Fig 5.9) clearly demonstrates how the English folk song centers around these elements. The melody of “Early One Morning” is grounded in tonic, dominant, subdominant harmonies and is constructed of arpeggiated triads in predictable phrase structures. These elements create that English “folkiness” described in The Musical Times. The next several paragraphs will show that these same qualities can be found in
Caractacus, suggesting that, consciously or otherwise, Elgar used a similar “folksiness” to exemplify the national identity and love of country.

Despite regular references to the uniquely ‘English’ quality of his music, Edward Elgar deliberately did not quote folk songs in his music. Unlike Vaughan Williams, Holst, Stanford, and Parry, all of whom arranged folksongs as part of their compositional output, Elgar’s body of work contains nothing comparable. Everett Helm, as quoted by Hans Keller, argues that this English quality of Elgar’s Music:

…can scarcely be defined in words, and it has nothing whatever to do with 'folksiness'. Elgar had very little use for folk song as an ingredient of concert music, and it would seem most unlikely that he ever strove consciously to 'sound English'… (Keller 2007, 105)

The “Englishness” of Elgar’s music does, in some ways, derive from an imitation of the English folk song. Keller points to the folk-like character in Elgar’s Serenade for Strings (the same piece which McVeagh identified as pastoral [McVeagh 2007, 15]) noting that Elgar

…harboured a strong folkish tendency without knowing it. The reason why it ‘eluded’ him and Helm and indeed everybody else is that he had assimilated it so thoroughly, unconsciously, elementally, in[to] his Continental diatonic idiom…that it does not in any way form a contrast to this diatonicism itself: it is a case of utter absorption rather than mere combination. (Keller 2007, 107)

30 There are a few times where Elgar is influenced by folk song, for example setting the text of an Eastern European folk song in his art song “The Torch.” This examples, however, are rare.
Keller’s analysis referred specifically to Elgar’s *Serenade for Strings*, highlighting the pentatonic scale on which the melodies of the *Serenade* are built. Indeed, it must be conceded that all folksong, to a lesser or greater extent, is indebted to this scale. Even if the folk-like melodies in *Caractacus* do not employ pentatonicism in an obvious way, other folk song elements strongly influenced Elgar’s compositions without unnecessarily restricting his style.

In most cases, folk elements in *Caractacus* occur in choruses since textual references to the “folk” imply groups rather than individuals. The simple harmonic style, straightforward phrase structure, and stepwise or arpeggiated melodies we associate with folk songs all appear in such places.

The first such example occurs in the third scene, between the “Woodland Interlude” and Eigen’s aria, where the chorus (identified in the libretto as youths and maidens singing as they weave “sacred garlands”)\(^{31}\) sing “Come beneath our woodland bow’rs.” (see Fig 5.10). The prosody of the text already suggests a simple folk song:

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Come! beneath our woodland bow’rs,
Wreath our hallow’d wreaths of flow’rs,
Priestly crowns of crimson hue,
Opening roses bright with dew
Come! scatter bud and blossom round you on the way,
Come! Till the tender greensward blushes like the day,
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Elgar goes to the trouble to repeat the last words of the first four lines to insure that each phrase lasts four measures, creating a balanced phrase structure. The melodic range of the soprano is very narrow, covering only a minor third. The two bass parts moving in open fifths lend a jaunty, charming character that underscores the clear rhythmic structure. Most interesting is the

\(^{31}\) Later, Orbin explains that the wreaths are woven to be hung on the shrine when Orbin’s treason is cursed.
harmonic progression of the upper three voices, the content of which is only tonic and subdominant chords. The first three chords are all tonic chords (with a seventh introduced in the tenor part of the last chord), after which, the chords alternate between subdominant and tonic triads. This leads to a plagal cadence that adds to the simplicity of folk and the timelessness of the outdoor scene Elgar has been trying to portray in this scene.\textsuperscript{32} Such an outdoor scene evokes the greatness of the English countryside and, by extension, England.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure5.10.png}
\caption{Scene III, Rehearsal 5-5}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{32} This is further evidence of Elgar’s avoidance of authentic cadences as a method to creating the timelessness of the countryside that was discussed in the “Love of Countryside” section above.
While the first phrase of this chorus clearly follows the expectations of folk music, the second and third phrases become increasingly inventive in how the folk melody is portrayed: The second phrase is a repetition of the first phrase transposed down a whole tone (to B-flat, the lowered leading tone of C). By lowering the leading tone, Elgar suggests mixolydian mode, a frequent aspect of folk-song. Later, this transposition prepares a way for the re-transition to the G-Major of Eigen’s aria (see Fig 5.11) that interrupts the chorus. A transposed repetition of the chorus’ second phrase leads to A-flat major (the Neapolitan of G) and a diminution of the melody. The A-flat is then inflected to an A-natural, the root of a half-diminished seventh in G, preparing Eigen’s entrance on C (in first inversion).

The continuation of the chorus setting the third and fourth phrases modulates to F (a key area frequently used by Elgar in this scene) resuming the alternation between the new key’s tonic and dominant (Fig 5.12). Here, the bass accompaniment becomes an antiphonal imitation between the divided tenor and alto voices, a textural expression that develops the simple texture of the preceding lines. The melody is also expanded, now extending over an octave. Elgar’s
method of elaborating on the basic elements of a folksong exhibits his ability to integrate a folk-like portrayal of the English countryside with his unique compositional style.

Figure 5.12: Scene III, Rehearsal 6

This type of choral writing occurs throughout the cantata, an earlier instance being the final chorus of Scene I, in which, according to the libretto, the “Spirits of the Hill” lull Caractacus to sleep. The textual commonality of “lulling” leads to a pastoral key (G), simple
phrase structure and a capella all keeping with this “nationalist” folk style. Finally, as Scene II opens, the druids and druid maidens prepare to invoke the Druid God Taranis. Again, this choral singing is simple and folk-like, the sequential triadic melody of the maidens alternatively combine with a second melody in the manner of a quodlibet.

While none of these examples are direct quotations of a folksong, each one portrays the character of English folk music, allowing Elgar to infuse the work with melodies that make it sound uniquely English and, as Parry put it, evoke a sense of pride in England and in the culture that produced such music. Pair this with Elgar’s portrayal of English countryside through mimetic and harmonic devices, and one can get a picture of how Elgar expressed patriotism through his love of nature in Caractacus. Much of the nationalist and imperialist sentiment at the turn of the century is centered on the greatness of the English culture and the desire to spread that culture throughout the world. Elgar highlights these elements of culture in Caractacus as a means to hymn the greatness of England in a uniquely Elgarian way.
CHAPTER SIX

CHIVALRY AND MILITARISM: THE MULTI-FACETED CHARACTER OF THE BRITISH ARMY

Considering the negative public reaction to recent wars, it is impressive that militarism was cast in such a positive light in turn of the century England. The contemporary military is often treated critically – a result of the fact that military action is often viewed as oppressive, unwelcome, and coercive. Britain’s world-wide empire, however, required a powerful military to maintain order. Thus, Britain needed to portray its military as a necessary and positive part of the empire’s mission. This was accomplished by comingling the positive ideals of ancient chivalry and medieval knights with the contemporary British military.

While chivalry had no direct relation to the modern concept of a military – any link between King Arthur and British Imperial conquest is a stretch at best – the British government saw Arthurian legend as a way of selling the idea that military service provided young minds with the discipline needed to be upstanding members of society, trained in proper comportment, and morally strong. In The Daily Mail’s account of the Diamond Jubilee, much attention was paid to the military exercises that were part of the procession to Saint Paul’s. There was much talk of the “…straight, and smart, and strong…” troops as a testimony to the “greatness of the British Race,” the story told in The Daily Mail of sending British commanders to take control of the “savages” of a country and teach them to “…march and shoot as he tells them, to obey him and to believe in him and die for him and the Queen…” and that is part of the “world-shaping force” of the Empire. Perhaps the most telling statement regarding the role that British military service played in forming exemplary citizens is found in the words: “Pink-faced boys, already men in self-command…” (To Saint Paul's: The Procession en Route 1897). Such sentiment
conveyed the message that Britain’s military was a type of education that transformed young boys into honorable men worthy of a seat at the Round Table.

At the height of the British Empire and the Diamond Jubilee, chivalry was a principle device used to improve the opinion of those men who joined the military. Beyond inculcating obedience and courage in combat, chivalry encouraged them to modify their personality and embrace all aspects of the human condition; a King like Arthur, who loved his Queen Guinevere as much as he loved battle, became the image of the British military at least as interested in gaining honor as exerting power. Elgar’s music used aspects of chivalry and military as an integral part of Caractacus, defining how these early ancestors of the English military had shaped contemporary notions of Empire.

**Chivalry, Militarism, and Elgar**

The influences of chivalry and militarism on Elgar’s concept of the imperialist state are often confused. In his analysis of Elgar’s image as an imperialist, Harper-Scott failed effectively to delineate these two aspects of Elgar’s embrace of Imperialism. Harper-Scott begins his discussion by citing Sigefried Sassoon’s observations on Elgar. While Sassoon’s analysis is strongly colored by his pacifism, he does reveal that Elgar often described himself as a “Great Gentleman,” a phrase that more effectively aligns Elgar with chivalrous rather than with militaristic attitudes (Harper-Scott 2007a, 24). Sassoon describes Elgar as taking pride in his “conventional appearance,” a characterization that better fits the image of a chivalrous gentleman – the “duc d’Elgar” as (cynically) portrayed by Sassoon – than a general in the British Army.\(^{33}\)

\(^{33}\) It is fair to note that the rest of Sassoon’s critical analysis does not describe what the average would consider chivalrous: self-centered, inconsiderate, pretending, disguising his feelings, etc. Harper-Scott is very effective at dismissing these scathing criticisms by understanding the circumstances under which Sassoon made his observation. In essence, the criticism is quite personal and biased, not allowing for an impartial analysis of Elgar’s character.
The self-concept of the “Great Gentleman,” seen as an aspiration towards chivalry, affected many of Elgar’s early works. The first work that established him as a uniquely British musical voice was the *Froissart Overture*, a work forever identified with Elgar’s inscription “when chivalry lifted up her lance on high.” Here, we encounter for the first time, the chivalrous hero that dominated his musical subjects. The theme continues in *The Black Knight*, a text translated by Longfellow in *Hyperion*. This choral symphony recounts the deeds of the unknown knight who champions the king’s daughter. Another chivalrous hero appears in Elgar’s *Tales from the Saga of King Olaf*, another text by S.W. Longfellow. Here King Olaf endures epic journeys and sacrifices to bring Christianity to heathen people. In both of these textual examples of chivalry, the hero is an outcast, an overt autobiographical depiction of his aspirations to effect significant social change. The heroic nature of chivalry depicted in *The Black Knight* and *King Olaf* is effectively summarized by Elgar in his description of the *Froissart Overture*, where paraphrasing John Claverhouse, he praises the “knight's 'loyalty to his king, pure faith to his religion, hardihood towards the enemy, and fidelity to his lady-love’ (McVeagh 2007, 13).”

If any of the elements of chivalry described by Claverhouse inform the militant side of Elgar’s persona, it would be “hardihood towards the enemy.” This commingling of the militant and chivalrous influences demonstrates just how successfully the British government was able to forge this blend of character traits. In Elgar’s mind, however, chivalry was not the inevitable consequence of military service (as the government would have had one believe) (Richards 2001, 58), but a necessary activity for anyone desirous of being perceived as a “great gentleman.”

In addition to that image of the “Great Gentleman,” Elgar felt pressed to portray the image of an army general as a sort of marital adhesive (Harper-Scott 2007a). Having married the

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34 McVeagh, in *Elgar: The Music Maker*, points out this trend. (16)
daughter of one involved in the Indian Civil Service, Elgar felt obliged to assume a pro-imperialist, pro-militant, persona. Elgar also saw the cultivation of this image as helpful in gaining acceptance by the upper-class, not only as a measure of social status, but also as entrée to the patrons that were essential to his musical career. This complex of mental attitudes informs such works as the *Imperial March*, *The Banner of St. George*, and *The Crown of India*, each of which was consciously designed to bring him prestige and popularity within the pro-imperialist groups.

Harper-Scott further describes this aspect of Elgar’s cultivation of an imperial personality by citing contemporary accounts that documented Elgar’s personification of the military type (Harper-Scott 2007a, 25). Elgar certainly did look the part, much of his music reflecting military-imperialist agenda of Britain at that time. It is essential to emphasize that Elgar’s military works were essentially paeans to chivalry that went by a different name to match the public interest of the time. At several points the jingoistic sentiment of the *Imperial March* is tempered by melodies more evocative of “pure faith” and “loyalty” than militarism. *The Banner of St. George*, while externally focused on the British military uniform, saw St. George as the embodiment of Claverhouse’s notions of chivalry rather than merely a powerful warrior (Harper-Scott 2007a, 25). Conveniently, Elgar’s plan of becoming a “Great Gentleman” by portraying chivalrous heroes in his music was completely compatible with the British propaganda, and ultimately co-opted by it.

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35 In his analysis of Elgar’s imperialist motives, Harper-Scott argues that Elgar’s imperialist interests were closely aligned with his own upward social mobility. While many of Elgar’s audible decisions seem grounded in political motivations, it would seem he took aspects of his personality (the “Great Gentleman”) and tweaked them to conform with contemporary public opinion.
Caractacus as a “Great Gentlemen”

Presented with the story of Caractacus as an outcast from the Roman Empire who is upright, religious, and patriotic, Elgar was unable to resist using him to project his own support for the British Empire. Without much effort, he was able to blend his own ideas of chivalry and the quasi-jingoistic sentiments without creating a paradox. For Elgar, Caractacus was proof that chivalrous personality traits such as courage, compassion, and eloquence which produced the “Greatness of the British Race (To Saint Paul's: The Procession en Route 1897)” in the contemporary military were present centuries earlier in Caractacus. Elgar presents his message by portraying Caractacus as a blend of chivalry and military prowess, and his fellow Britons as “Great Gentlemen” instead of jingoistic militants.

As a character, Caractacus poses an intriguing complex of emotions and personalities. His entrance in the first scene of the cantata portrays the qualities one expects to find in a king/general. His mood changes quickly, urging his soldiers to rest and prepare for battle. Caractacus’ description of the evening scene surrounding him changes dramatically from the preceding music (see Fig 6.1). This music also includes a leitmotiv that Elgar labels as “rest.” In addition, the meter changes to a triple meter which, according to Pauer, represents a sincere devotion. The key moves to E-flat major, which Pauer describes as a serious, courageous, and dignified key. All of these elements seem to represent a gentle rather than aggressive Caractacus. The melody accompanying the text is more folk-like than militant. The stepwise melody, the rising sequence, and the orchestration (flute and strings) are reminiscent of the kind of melody that Elgar uses to portray the countryside. In addition, the melody and orchestration portray a gentler side of the warrior king.
Caractacus’ mood changes, however, as he considers the imminent battle (see Fig 6.2). The music changes to f-minor (the d-flat added as an accidental), a key Pauer describes as harrowing and indicative of rising passion.

Figure 6.1: Scene I, Rehearsal 20-7
As Elgar raises the vocal range to that of a more heroic baritone, the image of a dominant military personality emerges in keeping with Pauer’s description of the emotional affect of higher notes. Caractacus’ words give the clues necessary to understand the seemingly contradictory characters of Caractacus in the first scene. While describing the battle in what is certainly very passionate and militaristic music, the text gives away the purpose of the battle, and makes Caractacus into a character similar to the Knight as described by Claverhouse in his description of the *Froissart Overture* (McVeagh 2007, 13). This loyalty to his people and devotion to his religion present in this text add depth to a personality that is “[hardy] towards his enemy.” The cantata’s text portrays Caractacus as a military hero to reflect the popular praise accorded the military during the Diamond Jubilee. Elgar rounds out Caractacus’ character by giving him ample opportunity to exhibit the characteristics of a true gentleman. While there are few other scenes that show multiple sides of Caractacus’ character like this one, there are many scenes in which one single aspect predominates.

Elgar’s most militant portrayal of Caractacus appears in the cantata’s second scene, shortly after he receives the Arch-Druid’s prophecy (see Fig 6.3). The energetic duple-meter rhythm abounds in dotted rhythms. The simple melody is filled with short phrases that, with the
jaunty rhythm convey the energy of young soldiers preparing for battle. The harmonic motion to a simple alternation of tonic and dominant is reminiscent of a march. To complete the military overtones, the entire soldier’s chorus enters at the end of each of the three verses to echo Caractacus’ final words and sing an extended chorus at the end of the third verse (alternating between tonic and dominant) to bring a close to the segment (see Fig 6.4). The entire scene, reminiscent of a Gilbert and Sullivan opera, portrays well the camaraderie of a group of soldiers.

In contrast to this bravado, Caractacus’ lament in Scene 5 (after the battle with the Romans has been lost) and his speech before the Roman Emperor Claudius reveal the nobler, more chivalrous side of his character. While the music of the lament is intriguing,\(^36\) perhaps more interesting is the text:

\(^36\) The music of Caractacus’ lament is worthy of study because of its 7/4 time signature; although almost unheard of at the time, this meter effectively portrays Caractacus’ disorientation after being defeated. The high baritone
Oh, my warriors, tell me truly,
O’er the red graves where ye lie
That your monarch led you duly,
First to charge and last to fly;

Speak, ah! speak, beloved voices,
From the chambers where ye feast,
Where the war god stern rejoices
That his host has been increas’d;

Say that first I clove the legions
Where the golden eagle flew
O’er the head to whom allegiance
From the Roman foe was due;

Say, too, when the fight was ending,
That with glazing eyes ye saw
Me my quiv’ring ranks defending
From the greedy Roman maw;

And the god shall give you heeding,
And across the heav’nly plain,
He shall smile, and see me leading
My dead warriors once again!

Of all the thoughts and emotions Caractacus might have had, his greatest concern is whether or not his leadership was honorable. He wonders if he inspired his soldiers to act with courage, if he was valiant in the face of the enemy, and whether he continued to fight even when success was dubious. These feelings fit the category of the chivalrous warrior well. His concern for his leadership skills demonstrated his commitment to his people, removing any possible stain of Imperial sentiment. Elgar’s elimination of the fourth stanza of Acworth’s libretto is compelling proof of his attempt to place Caractacus above any negative militaristic stereotype:

Say ye saw me stand thereunder,
In the thickest of the ring,

range of his singing expresses Caractacus’ anxiety over his defeat. In addition, the chorus (this time representing villagers instead of soldiers) echoes each stanza of Caractacus’ lament – a haunting reminder of the soldiers’ echo in the second scene (fig 6.3).
While the battle crash’d like thunder,
Fighting bravely – like a king;

Similarly, his final words to the Roman Emperor Claudius in scene six, Caractacus revealed his true nobility.

Do then thy worst on me; my people spare
Who fought for freedom in our land at home;
Slaves they are not; be wise and teach them there
Order, and law, and liberty with Rome.

Caractacus is less concerned with his welfare than with that of the people he serves. His sentiment summons forth a noble melody in which octaves and fifths depict a courageous character; similarly Elgar’s effective use of sequence and the upper range (Fig 6.5) elicit Caractacus’ self-sacrificing chivalry. The first indication of how Elgar views Caractacus’ character is his use of the term “maestoso,” a marking that recalls the similar tempo markings associated with Elgar’s other chivalrous descriptions of heroes.

Figure 6.5: Scene VI, Rehearsal 31-3

In contrast to the majestic opening and closing of Caratacus’ speech, the text and harmonic implication of the middle section emphasize his patriotic character (Fig 6.6). The text’s reference to the woodlands is paired with the freedom of the British people and highlights Elgar’s commingled love of country and nature. The key quickly moves to G-major, the pastoral key associated with Eigen discussed in chapter four (p. 68), to reference the countryside. Many
of the folk themes used in the first three scenes return (see Fig 6.6). Most interesting is Elgar’s use of the “Britain” theme identified by Moore and heard repeatedly in Scene I (Moore 1984, 230). While the violins recall the theme its in entirety, Caractacus sings fragments of the theme, recalling the ideals of the Pax Britannica (see Fig 6.7). Caractacus’ fragmented singing is also evident in Fig 6.7, a musical representation of Caractacus’ “sobbing” over the loss of his homeland (Harper-Scott 2007a, 43). The common thread throughout all of these examples is Caractacus’ love of country boldly declared to the Roman Emperor and sandwiched (Harper-Scott would say *immured*[^37]) between the militant and noble sentiments of the outer segments of Caractacus’ speech. The resulting gestalt is not that of a one-dimensional militant king and general, but rather a complex chivalrous monarch[^38] who embodies all of the aspects of the “Great Gentleman” that Elgar himself aspired to become.

![Figure 6.6: Scene VI, Rehearsal 27](image)

[^37]: Harper-Scott (Harper-Scott, Edward Elgar, Modernist 2006) discusses the ideas of “immured” tonalities in his second symphony. The same principle seems to appear here.

[^38]: Perhaps it is this portrayal of the chivalrous monarch that finally persuaded Queen Victoria to allow Elgar to dedicate the work to her.
A Chivalrous Army

Elgar’s nuanced portrayal of Caractacus is not unique to him alone. A comparison of Elgar’s portrayal of the British and Roman forces also helps provide the necessary context for understanding the final chorus. While some have suggested that Rome represents contemporary England (Little 1998)\(^39\), Elgar more likely had in mind an essential difference between them:

One of the problems ... which it [the British Empire] has to face is how to foster Imperial spirit without crushing the national feeling, how to do what Rome could not do - combine Liberty with Empire. (Betts 1971)

In simple terms, Britons would ultimately succeed where Rome failed because, unlike the Romans, they are chivalrous. An interlinear comparison of Elgar’s musical introduction of each group will make this difference clear.

The Roman Triumphal March (Scene VI) best conveys Elgar’s characterization of the Roman soldiers. Elgar’s tempo marking as the chorus enters (rehearsal 6-2) is *pomposamente*, signifying a less noble character than the *maestoso* used later for Caractacus. In addition, the text they sing is quite violent, conjuring the images of “sharply” ringing cymbals, “screaming” trumpets, and a “glaring” sun. Beyond obvious statements like “The march triumphal thunders” and “A shout that shakes the air,” Elgar characterizes the Romans as violent, war-loving people, who take pride in conquest for the sake of conquest. The most violent moment follows

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\(^39\) Many have noted the similarities between the Roman Empire and the British Empire (Moore, Richards, and McGuire), but most refer to this article by Patrick Little as the origin of this particular reading of the final chorus.
Caractacus’ moving speech, when the chorus shouts “slay the Briton!” (see Fig 6.8) much like the turba choruses in Bach’s passions. This reaction fits the trope that the only difference between the Roman and British empires is that Britain valued and encouraged the liberty of its subjects, while Rome did not.

![Figure 6.8: Scene VI, Rehearsal 40-2](image)

In contrast to the Romans, the textual depiction of the British soldiers in the first scene centers on courage and love of country, both aspects of a ‘Great Gentleman.’ While the tempo marking at the entrance of the chorus provides no clue (Elgar marks only Allegro), the use of texts like “comrades firm and fearless…” and “on like men undaunted” portray the noble courage and camaraderie of the British army. These expressions of courage are coupled with a need to protect the British countryside paired with Elgar’s named “desolation” theme (Rushton
2012a): “Our homesteads burn, and, all between, Wide wasted lie our woodlands green.” These images underscore the essential goodness of the British soldiers and Empire.

The musical characteristics of these two choruses vividly portray the contrast between Rome and Britain. The orchestration of the British chorus features woodwinds, instruments which Berlioz identified as full of artless grace (Oboe), noble and epic (Clarinet), and tender (flute). Conversely, the Romans are accompanied by lots of brass: trumpet fanfare (proud) and trombones (Majestic, awe-inspiring, and formidable). Following Berlioz, these instrumental contrasts suggest that the British troops are graceful, noble, and tender, while the Roman troops are proud and formidable (Berlioz 1948).

Similarly informative is Elgar’s choice of key. While the Roman march remains steadfastly in C major (a key identified by Pauer as full of powerful resolve and manly earnestness), the British chorus moves through several keys, opening in c minor (according to Pauer, descriptive of earnestness and passionate intensity). As the chorus describes the destruction of their homes, Elgar modulates to f minor, associated with melancholy. As night closes, he darkens the tonal center to a somber e-flat minor. This variety of keys reinforces the Britons as different from the brutish Romans – ‘great gentlemen’ possessing complex characters.

One should also take note of the several themes that Elgar creates that are associated with the British army and are introduced at the beginning of the entire work. The first theme introduced in the work is described as connective material, and has a march like feel that can be associated with the British soldiers. This theme is followed by the march like rhythm described by Elgar as “British soldiers” and returns repeatedly when the soldiers are present. Finally, the “Watchmen” theme runs repeatedly through this scene and has a connection to his desolation theme, and returns again during the final chorus (Rushton 2012a).
A final contrast is the difference in the mimetic character of the phrases that represent the two camps. The orchestral themes representing Britain and Rome (Fig 6.9) (Moore 1984, 230) portray the British as artful and thoughtful, the Romans militaristic.

![Representative Themes](image)

**Figure 6.9: Representative Themes**

Similar differences occur in other themes sung by the British and Roman troops. For purposes of demonstration, two examples will suffice: the Romans’ “but hark a shout, the emperor fills the cruel chair” (Fig 6.10) and the Britons’ “our homesteads burn” (see Fig 6.11). As might be expected, the music sung by the Roman soldiers is heavily accented and lacks harmonic thirds. On the contrast, the Britons melody (described by Moore as “melancholy” and associated with Elgar’s “desolation” motive) is low, accompanied by strings that add to the legato quality used by Elgar to portray British temperament.

![Scene VI, Rehearsal 22](image)

**Figure 6.10: Scene VI, Rehearsal 22**
The sharp contrast between Elgar’s portrayal of the two armies seems to contradict the view that Imperial Rome and Elgar’s Britain were comparable. Were that so, Elgar surely would not have used *pomposamente* and such vigorous, even violent melodies and texts to characterize the Romans. Nor would he have given the British soldiers such depth of musical character. It seems more likely, then, that Elgar sought to demonstrate that the chivalry that was a hallmark of the nineteenth-century British Empire was already present centuries earlier when they banded together to defend themselves from outside invasion. Even though Rome ultimately prevailed, it
was the British character that allowed them to create a superior empire, in which – as the final chorus put it – “…no slave shall be subjected, no trophy wet with tears…”

These two ideas – a chivalrous army and a refined commander – are themes that run throughout Caractacus, exemplifying Elgar’s intention to laud the ideals of the British Empire. Such ideas downplay the power of the British army, emphasizing its role in creating responsible, valiant gentlemen for whom chivalry was a positive aspect of their society. Such values were clearly important, even if an army was required to instill them forcibly in Britain’s colonies. By promoting these ideas in his cantata, Elgar curried favor with the tight-knit, upper-class circle of pro-imperialists of which he wanted to be a part.
CHAPTER SEVEN
SOCIAL DARWINISM: BRITAIN’S ALTRUISTIC OBLIGATION

The final piece of the ideological foundation of the British Empire was the concept of Social Darwinism. Central to this idea was the notion that some civilizations were naturally in a better state or more evolved than others; consequently, it was the responsibility of advanced civilizations to raise lower ones to their level.

While what was meant by “better state” remains somewhat enigmatic, the mechanism tasked to achieve it involved religion – specifically the roles of missionaries. Nominally, they went to new British colonies to spread Christianity. As early as 1792 an important article by William Carey argued that it was a Christian obligation to “convert the heathens.” Consequently, missionary societies were formed to train and support missionaries sent to the uncivilized British colonies (Smith 1998, 43). Fifty years later, David Livingstone reported to the Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary Society:

There are many and very large tribes in the direction in which I go. All are sitting in darkness and the shadow of death. I hope God will in mercy permit me to establish the gospel somewhere in this region… (Smith 1998, 47)

Spreading Christianity was the primary mechanism employed to help lesser civilizations rise to the level of the “British state;” however, Jeffrey Richards points out the idea that spreading British social values was also essential:

…the idea that the British being the greatest race in the world had a duty to provide government and justice for ‘inferior races’… (Richards 2001, 14)

Richards argues that this “leadership principle” was seamlessly woven into the missionary outreach that was fundamental to Britain’s dissemination of the very values that distinguished its

40 This article was published by William Carey and was titled An enquiry into the obligations of Christians, to use means for the conversion of the heathens.
empire from Rome’s empire. The Daily Mail, at the time of the Diamond Jubilee espoused a popular belief that British military establishments across the Empire were equipped for this mission by their creation of “civilized soldiers:”

…that we send out a boy here and a boy there, and the boy takes hold of the savages of the part he comes to, and teaches them to march and shoot as he tells them, to obey him and believe in him and die for him and the Queen. A plain, stupid, uninspired people, they call us, and yet we are doing this with every kind of savage man there is. (At Saint Paul’s: A Wondrous Sight 1897)

Although the focus was on training ‘savages’ to be soldiers, the larger goal was that they also become gentlemen of the very type Elgar aspired to be.

In Caractacus, Elgar exemplifies this theme, portraying the “conversion” of Orbin, the suitor of Caractacus’ daughter Eigen, from membership in a “semi-priestly order of minstrels” (a phrase Acworth used in the introduction to the libretto) into a committed member of Caractacus’ army. This portion of the story (which has no historical basis41) lines up quite conveniently with Britain’s idea of making “savages” into soldiers as a way of equipping them to be members of a civilized society. Acworth has Orbin follow Caractacus, the hero and “great gentleman” of the story. By this turn of the plot, Acworth created a character who symbolized the positive effects of social-darwinism espoused by Victorian Britain.

The one shortcoming of this analysis is the fact that Orbin leaves “religion,” albeit Celtic mysticism, to join a group that is essentially non-religious. Considering Elgar’s issues surrounding religion, it comes as no surprise that he opted not to make religion the ideological centerpiece of the work (McGuire 2007b). Charles McGuire’s research into any possible role the Celtic revival played in British nationalism reveals that Caractacus may have only become a Christian while in Rome; indeed he and Eigen may themselves have become missionaries who

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41 Acworth, in the argument at the beginning of the score, admits that Orbin is an imaginary character.
attempted to convert the Celts to Christianity. In the libretto, the Arch-Druid’s claim to be both the “voice of wisdom” and the “voice of God” is potentially blasphemous and Orbin’s subsequent decision to join Caractacus parallels Elgar’s own decision to leave a Church of England he regarded as corrupt and pursue, at no small personal risk to his aspirations, Catholicism.

Most interesting, however, is how Elgar textually and musically portrays Orbin’s transformation from common “savage” to a “great gentleman” by virtue of his association with Caractacus. Orbin’s transformation is best shown by observing the changes that take place linguistically and musically during his conversion.

**Before the Conversion**

There are essentially two moments that provide insight into Orbin’s character before he leaves the Druidic order. The first is overhearing Eigen relate the tale of a druid maiden in Scene I. More interesting and complex is Orbin’s interaction with the Arch-Druid as he receives the prophecy (Scene two).

In both scenes, Orbin’s dialogue is straightforward and unornamented. In Scene I he responds to a question posed by Caractacus dismissively, immediately directing his attention to Eigen’s tale. The incipient nature of the Orbin’s contribution to the scene implies a poorly developed – almost dismissible – character connected to an uneducated person. In the next scene, Orbin’s role becomes much more important as he attempts to read the omens in the shield belonging to the war god from whom the Druids received prophecy. He says only what needs to be said, scarcely hinting at the role he is to play. Orbin seems little more than a tool to keep the

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42 McGuire refers to the book by James McKay (McKay 1875) that outlines the mysticism associated with the Herefordshire Beacon and its connection with the story of Caractacus.
43 Elgar stated that Anglicanism was hopelessly anti-catholic and purely a tool of nationalism (McGuire 2007b, 17).
story moving. His plain speech and limited verbal interaction symbolize the minor role that an “unredeemed savage” can play in the British Empire.

The music which Elgar associates with Orbin is similarly plain. His theme, played before his entrance (see fig 7.1), is very simple, short, and harmonically complex. While his mere four lines of text in scene one are set to music that forms a very basic periodic structure, it meanders chromatically (briefly touching on the key signature’s tonic – but rarely in root position) until arriving, rather awkwardly, to B major – the key of Eigen’s tale – via the leading tone of F-sharp (see Fig 7.2). Both phrases of Orbin’s melody end on a chord in first inversion. This harmonic instability conveys insecurity, even lack of strength, in Orbin’s character.

Figure 7.1: “Orbin” Scene I, Rehearsal 33-20

Figure 7.2: Scene I, Rehearsal 38-4
Orbin’s singing in the second scene is not so chromatic, although some intriguing chromaticism does appear at the text “dim the shadows gather.” The music preceding the actual prophecy has several seemingly truncated gestures, sometimes as short as two notes (see Fig 7.3). Nor does the melody by which Orbin describes his vision seem to fit its key signature (see Fig 7.4). While the key signature indicates B-flat major or g minor, Orbin seems to be singing in C minor or E-flat major. Even though the accompaniment includes A-flats to establish the key, Orbin’s melody doesn’t strongly outline C minor until the penultimate phrase of the vision (Fig 7.4), followed shortly by a sudden shift in harmony to a B-flat minor chord in first inversion at the end of the prophecy.

Figure 7.3: Scene II, Rehearsal 12-5

Figure 7.4: Scene II, Rehearsal 14
Elgar’s musical representation of Orbin makes his character seem unrefined. His melodies lack the well-crafted phrases sung by either Caractacus or Eigen presented in the preceding chapters. Nor are the complex chromaticism and seemingly truncated phrases characteristic of the English folk tradition. This complex of characteristics portrays Orbin as “uncivilized.” Though in love with Eigen and working toward the victory of the Britons, he has not yet developed as the chivalrous, heroic character he will become later in the story.

The Moment of Conversion

The moment when Orbin decides that he will stand and fight with Caractacus prompts a dramatic change of character – a change that occurs in the middle of his singing. His moment of conversion comes when he shouts “No! Meet them with our war cry ringing!” in the third scene. Following this declaration, he is given well rhymed, metric poetry to sing:

Meet them with our war cry ringing.  
Meet them songs of triumph singing!  
In thy hand thou bear’st the omen,  
Trust to that against the foemen;  
Spell and charm will fail thee ever,  
But thy sword deceive thee never.

Orbin has given up on the power of the druid’s omens, deciding instead to trust the strength of the sword. Also, rhymed couplets (AABBCC) stand in stark contrast to all his past dialogues (which are uniformly ABAB). Most dramatically, the three lines preceding Orbin’s change of heart are significantly shorter, do not rhyme, and use the same word at the end of each sentence. Taken together, these texts portray an uneducated, unrefined man:

Shall we greet them?  
Shall we meet them?  
And with mighty spell defeat them?
While there is penultimate syllabic rhyme, the repetitive use of the same word to end each phrase sets the stage for the comparatively elegant poetry that follows.

Elgar makes a similar dramatic change in Orbin’s music (see Fig 7.5). At his cry, “No!” Elgar suddenly modulates from E-flat to G major – the dominant key of the E-flat’s relative minor, and the same key used for Elgar’s portrait of the English countryside. The following music suddenly begins to imitate English folk song. Orbin’s phrases are heroic and have a more organized structure which is echoed almost literally by the chorus of soldiers. These six phrases, reminiscent of Caractacus’ singing a few measures earlier (refer to Fig 5.3), effectively suggest that Orbin has joined the group of civilized men led by Caractacus. In addition, Elgar refers to this new theme as “Orbin’s exaltation song” while Herbert Thompson calls it his “heroic song,” suggesting a significant change in Orbin’s personality (Rushton 2012a). The music preceding his “No!” highlights the contrast: these melodies are grouped in short, truncated phrases similar to his phrases at the beginning of the scene (see Fig 7.3). This dramatic contrast of Orbin’s characterization reflects Elgar’s intention to present Orbin as a changed being, a true representative of the altruism of the British Empire. In fact, Orbin’s theme undergoes a change
from this point on (see fig 7.6) that Elgar characterizes as “noble and bold” (Rushton 2012a).
After the Conversion

To solidify the change in Orbin’s character, his dialogue in scene three resembles the dialogue immediately after his conversion:

Eigen, my lady lov’d, I go,
And but for thee no tear should flow;
Pray to the gods to grant my arm
To guard thy father’s head from harm,
And pray this parting may not be
Our last beneath the greenwood tree.

While the simple rhyme scheme mirrors the music of his conversion, his speech is very altruistic. Instead of asking Eigen to pray for his safety, he implores her to ask the gods to help him protect her father. Unlike his bureaucratic dialogue in scenes one and two, here his speech is permeated by chivalrous thoughts, worthy of one who has evolved into a civilized being and a gentleman.
Elgar’s music validates this transformation. As he recounts the previous scene’s events to Eigen, Orbin reprises Caractacus’ chivalrous battle theme from Scene II (see Fig 7.7). Such a quotation casts Orbin as upstanding soldier. Later, as Orbin professes his love for Eigen, his melody imitates folk song (Fig 7.8):

The harmonic progression follows predictable patterns and the conjunct melody full of gentle neighboring tones and suspensions strengthens the simple folk-like melody that is representative of Orbin’s new chivalrous nature.

Orbin’s evolution from dutiful bureaucrat to courageous, chivalrous soldier in scene three confirms the British belief that their pursuit of Empire actually improved the lives of their new
colonists, if not willing fellow citizens. The message of Social-Darwinism which dominated the pro-imperialist propaganda at the time of the Diamond Jubilee, clearly influenced Elgar and Acworth’s development of the libretto and Elgar’s powerful music. The evolution of Orbin stands as a powerful example of the positive effects of Social-Darwinism and ultimately the altruism of British colonial expansion.
CHAPTER EIGHT

THE CULMINATING BATTLE

It is now necessary to discuss the breakdown in dramatic continuity in scenes four and five in contrast to the other scenes of Elgar’s cantata. A lack of dramatic interest during scenes four and five was identified in the introduction since they contain the much anticipated battle between Britain and Rome, but only described detached reportage of an event happening somewhere distant from the presumed geographic focus of the other events. At first, the chorus recants only rumors of the British retreat: “Wild rumours shake our calm retreat, There comes the noise of hurrying, hurrying feet.” Then Eigen reveals a conversation with a Druid Maiden, whom she met in the first scene, in which the defeat of the Britons is foreshadowed:

Once again through the thicket
Came the maid of the Druids I met of yore;
No breath was abroad that might ruffle her form,
But her tresses were tossed as if lash’d by a storm,
And she spoke and she cursed thee, - O father, beware!
“Who falls from the mountain shall fall by the sword.”

Finally, soldiers arriving back in the hills describe the grim scene of battle. They are followed by Caractacus, who sings his most melancholy “aria,” pleading with the warriors to validate his leadership during the battle. While many different people recount the events of the battle, all do so in a way detached from reality. We never “see” the events that mark the culmination toward which the first three scenes have built. To further add to the dramatic discontinuity, the entire fifth scene consists of a single chorus bemoaning the unfortunate fate of Caractacus’ men. Throughout both scenes, the audience is never presented with a direct portrayal of the carnage and eventual capture of the Britons. While the audience does witness the trial and eventual pardon of Caractacus (scene six), the decisive battle is never actually depicted directly, only told as a third person narrative.
As mentioned in the introduction, the bulk of Elgar’s music (just over 80% of the total number of measures in the work) occur in scenes one, two, three, and six; this total is far more than the two-thirds that would have occupied these scenes if the six scenes were of equal length and dramatic import. The imbalance is made more obvious when one realizes the climactic battle between Rome and Britain accounts for less than one-fifth of the musical duration of the cantata. This musical imbalance seems to have been a conscious choice by Elgar’s librettist, who seemed determined to focus on peaceful resolution of the conflict as a metaphor for the triumph of Pax Britannica over imperialistic tyranny.

As the first three scenes show, Elgar uses Caractacus as a vehicle to highlight three core ideological concepts of Pax Britannica: nationalism –manifest in portrayal of country, chivalry and the contrast between the magnanimity of the Briton’s defeat and the brutish, unthinking behavior of the Romans, and social Darwinism portrayed through the “conversion” of Orbin as culturally transcendent. The final scene weaves all three themes together as a climatic conclusion: Caractacus’ chivalrous plea for the safety of his countrymen, his lament over the reality of never seeing his homeland again, and the celebration of social Darwinism through Orbin’s transformation.

The actual battle between Rome and the Britons, however, is difficult to connect with the core elements of the Pax Britannica for several reasons. While there is an element of chivalry in battle, the propaganda that glorified the British Empire’s military emphasized their role as peace-keepers bent on protecting and educating all citizens of the British Empire. (Bennet 1953, 252) Portraying the military in battle did not comport with the chivalrous image that nineteenth-century Britons sought to emphasize. We must also remember that, in the historically accurate story of Caractacus, the Britons are defeated by the Roman forces. Caractacus retreated into
hiding with the Queen of Brigantes and was only captured because she betrayed him to the Romans. Such an image does not mesh well with the image of a strong chivalrous military that Britain sought to portray. Given the conflict between the actual battle and the virtues of *Pax Britannica* extolled in the other scenes, Elgar had to find a way to frame the battle so that it reflected the positive aspects of the Pax Britannica.

Elgar’s solution was to avoid a direct portrayal of the battle relying on rumor and second-hand accounts. Not only did this solution allow Elgar to avoid the gruesome, unrefined reality of conflict, but it also allowed him to filter the events of the battle through the prism of the core values of the Pax Britannica: Eigen receives the news via the Druid Maiden, who symbolized the wooded English countryside; Caractacus recounts the battle so as to emphasize his chivalry and bravery, not his violent acts. Elgar and Acworth adjusted the storyline so that Caractacus did not hide ignominiously with the Queen of Brigantes, but instead returned to the Malvern Hills. In addition, no mention is made of his defeat and capture. Instead, an anonymous choral narrative bewails their captivity and their loss of access to the beauty of the English countryside:

```
Captive Britons, see them!
Hark to their tears as they embark!
Fettered, weary, worn, and white,
Sun of Britain, shun the sight!
Heav’ns of Britain, weep in rain,
They shall ne’er return again!
Lap their bark with sob and sigh,
Sombre Habren swirling by;
For they never more shall see
British heav’n, or land, or thee.44
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This scene does have one important purpose. It is Elgar’s opportunity to reintroduce the “prophecy” theme (see Table 4-1), labeling it “prophecy (fulfilled)” in the score he gave to

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44 It is important probably important to note that this represents the entire text used in the fifth scene, further emphasizing its limited scope in comparison to the other scenes of the work.
Thompson (Rushton 2012a). It is significant that this is the only other time in the score that Elgar uses this theme (first used in scene two during the Druid’s reception of the prophecy), suggesting that this prophecy does not apply in any way to contemporary Britain.

The breakdown of the dramatic narrative in scenes four and five actually strengthens Elgar’s commitment to creating a work that highlights the positive aspects of the British Empire, emphasizing the core elements of the ideological construct of Pax Britannica as presented in the contemporaneous propaganda. Since such elements were not present in the battle itself, or the defeat and capture of British soldiers, Elgar avoided a direct narration of it in order to downplay the less-gratifying aspects of battle, replacing them with story details that exemplify the Pax Britannica. Thus, Elgar was able to portray the positive aspects of British Empire in such a way as to curry favor with the British upper class and, eventually, to gain permission to dedicate the work to Queen Victoria.

**The Final Chorus**

Having discussed the cultural elements that shaped the British Empire and how Elgar portrayed these in Caractacus, we now need to return to the fundamental problems cited in discussions of the chorus. The primary complaint regarding this chorus was the seeming incongruity transition of its highly nationalistic, almost jingoistic lyrics at the conclusion of a work dedicated to extolling the virtues of the British Empire.

Having elucidated Elgar’s musical presentation of the underlying concepts of British Empire woven throughout the work, it would seem that only a chorus that extolled the positive and benevolent effects of that Empire could conclude such a Nationalistic work. In fact, the primary textual message of the chorus highlights the future benefits of Pax Britannica:

The clang of arms is over,  
Abide in peace and brood
On glorious ages coming,  
And Kings of British blood.

It is hardly an accident that such a chorus begins with “The clang of arms is over,” suggesting that the notion of blood-thirsty dominance ended with the fall of Roman Empire, whereas the emerging British Empire would be a peaceful version of empirical rule. Particularly telling is the second phrase’s command: “Abide in peace…” The final chorus continues:

And where the flag of Britain  
Its triple crosses rears,  
No slave shall be for subject,  
No trophy wet with tears;  
But folk shall bless the banner,  
And bless the crosses twin’d,

Here Acworth makes it abundantly clear that the avowed purpose of the British Empire does not involve the conquest associated with the Roman Empire. Instead of slavery and tear-stained subjects, the increasingly diverse constituency of the British Empire will bless their leaders and recognize the positive benefits of the empire they have joined. The conclusion of the chorus, the most overt statement of the *Pax Britannica*, is appropriately set to the music of the “Britain” theme:

For all the world shall learn it –  
Though long the task shall be –  
The text of Britain’s teaching,  
The message of the free;  
And when at last they find it,  
The nations all shall stand  
And hymn the praise of Britain,  
Like brothers, hand in hand.

The concluding lines of the final chorus clarify the images of the British Empire that Acworth sought to portray – freedom, education, and a brotherhood of nations united under the
British flag. Completely absent from the final chorus are any notions of jingoistic or colonialistic conquest.

That this chorus is, in fact, the logical extension of the virtues of *Pax Britannica* made in all the preceding music becomes clear with the discovery of Elgar’s inclusion of several important leitmotivs in the final chorus. As the chorus begins, Elgar reprises the connective material used in the first scene (see fig 8.1) as well as the British Soldier’s theme (see fig 8.2). The return of this material, heard nowhere else in the cantata, closes the form of the entire work. Elgar crafts the chorus in C-minor, the key of Rome as well as including the Roman theme only to allow the eventual displacement of its negative qualities by the themes more strongly associated with Britain. Immediately following the presentation of the Roman theme, Elgar reprises the “Watchmen” theme closely associated with the British army. Instead of the C major tonality of its initial appearance, Elgar uses the key of E-flat major, the key of Britain, changing the words to “Britons, alert!” (see fig 8.3). At the climax of the chorus (“all the world shall know it”) Elgar reprises the Britain theme, now labeled “Britain Glorious”; once introduced, it dominates the remainder of the chorus. In addition, Elgar introduces a new, martial, theme titled “Modern Britain” (see fig 8.4) derived from the mistletoe/oak theme of Scene 245, which forms a symbolic counterpoint with the “Britain Glorious” theme. The preponderance of themes associated with Britain constitute a glorification of the British Empire, absent any of the earlier themes associated with prophecy, desolation, or Taranis. In fact, Elgar places the fulfillment of the prophecy in scene five, undercutting Michael Kennedy’s negative interpretation of the work’s conclusion (Kennedy 2004, 56). In addition, his reprisal of several of themes that occurred in the beginning of the work leads to a stronger sense of musical continuity.

45 The original mistletoe theme can be found at Fig. 5.1
This collage of motives suggests that Elgar saw this chorus as the final confirmation of the *Pax Britannica* and the constituent virtues of nationalism, chivalry, and social Darwinism. Elgar notably weaves these elements throughout the entire work, but also underscores their significance by the careful elimination of themes that might reflect negatively on the emerging British Empire. His portrayal of Caractacus and his people’s love of the English countryside, Caratacus as a chivalrous hero, and the conversion and education of Orbin (Social Darwinism), reveals that the core elements of the British Empire were clearly present in the early ancestors of Modern Britain, suggesting that in his own time the emergence of Britain as a positive, peaceful
force throughout the world and an examplar of high-minded civility was the inevitable consequence of aspects of the British character that were latent in its distant past.
CONCLUSION

Seeing an opportunity in the commission from the Leeds Festival, Edward Elgar composed a work that would place him squarely in the middle of the pro-Imperial movement following Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. While he had always focused on glorifying British heroes for this commission, Elgar settled on a work that extolled the virtues of the Pax Britannica performed in this setting could be used as a means to garner favor with the Queen and, by extension, the aristocratic upper class, lending credence to his career as a composer.

In response to such an opportunity, Elgar composed Caractacus as a well-tailored reflection of his perception of the British Empire. While the story of Caractacus focuses on the resilience and courage of the early Britons despite their eventual defeat by the Roman military, the final chorus is an overt expression of the greatness of the British Empire, portraying it as the peaceful contemporary counterpart to the ancient Roman Empire. Many have criticized this final chorus because of its seeming disconnect from the rest of the cantata, however such assertions are often made from the assumption that Elgar intended to portray the Empire in a jingoistic light. With an understanding of Elgar’s perception of the British Empire as influenced by the propaganda of the time, the entire cantata can be viewed as a portrayal of the three fundamental elements of British propaganda regarding the Empire: love of country, chivalry, and Social Darwinism, and the final chorus is the logical conclusion to the work.

Elgar’s interpretation of national pride takes shape in his love of the natural landscape of England. He portrayed this in Caractacus through the regular references to the beauty of the landscape, but also through Caractacus’ daughter, Eigen. She is the messenger between Caractacus and a Druid Maiden, Elgar’s way to anthropomorphize the British landscape. Eigen’s scenes often take place in the woods, and her melodies and lyrics reflect the simplicity of the
British landscape. Elgar also wrote melodies that evoked the character of the English countryside and wrote choruses that evoked the character of the English folksong to highlight his love for England. Such positive portrayals of England’s natural beauty represent Elgar’s particular brand of nationalism and a representation of the first pillar of pro-Imperial propaganda.

Elgar used Caractacus as the captain of the British army to portray the positive effects of militarism in developing the chivalrous character of Britons. Caractacus’ dialogue throughout the cantata shows a unique balance between courage and altruism. Lyrics by Acworth with a particularly brutish flavor were omitted by Elgar, and those which highlighted his altruistic character, such as his monologue after the Britons retreated and his speech to Roman Emperor Claudius, were given a particularly heroic musical character. In addition, Elgar juxtaposed the British and Roman armies by portraying the Romans as musically rough and uncivilized, while the Britons were portrayed with carefully crafted musical accompaniment.

Finally, Elgar exhibited Social Darwinism in action by presenting the “conversion” of Orbin (a fictional character created by Acworth) from an uncivilized Druid to a member of Caractacus’ army. Over the course of the cantata, Orbin’s dialogue becomes increasingly selfless while the melodic character of his phrases transforms from awkward and truncated to civilized and folk-like.

Elgar’s decision to omit any direct portrayal of the battle between the Roman and British armies fit well in Elgar’s design to portray the peaceful aspects of the Pax Britannica. Such a decision, while causing a breakdown in the dramatic continuity of the cantata, provided Elgar an opportunity to reemphasize the pillars of the British Empire and move quickly to Caractacus’
trial at Rome where Elgar could drive home his portrayal of Caractacus’ heroic and altruistic persona as a template for the ideal Briton.

Upon observing a consistent portrayal of Elgar’s interpretation of Imperialist propaganda throughout the cantata, the final chorus takes on a different character. Instead of portraying a domineering militaristic image of the British Empire, the chorus emphasizes the brotherhood, freedom, and peace offered to those who fall under British rule. Elgar’s positive portrayal of the Pax Britannica certainly led to Queen Victoria’s eventual granting Elgar permission to dedicate Caractacus to her, affecting his acceptance among the British aristocracy which plausibly played a role in his future success in England.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Rushton, Julian. "Caractacus Thematic Table." Personal email from author, September 1, 2012a.

—. "Making Caractacus the role of Herbert Thompson." Personal email from author, September 1, 2012b.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scene I</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full score</td>
<td>VS$^i$ p./bar</td>
<td>Elgar’s numbers / description entered into the vocal score$^ii$ NB pp. 148–9 are missing except for the lowest system</td>
<td>Thompson’s example numbers / salient adjective or epithet (all his own words)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>1/1</td>
<td>1. Quasi Marcia Strong rhythm</td>
<td>1. Martial rhythms … march-like pulsations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>1/3</td>
<td>2. Link used to connect across section of this march</td>
<td>1. a sort of connecting link between the various sections of the movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>3. Caractacus’ theme. Sometimes sombre and as transformed later</td>
<td>2. Caractacus theme … its character changing with the situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/1 fig.2</td>
<td>2/4</td>
<td>[Elgar says nothing about this idea]</td>
<td>3. Example of more march rhythm, to be developed later by the chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/3 fig.4</td>
<td>3/1</td>
<td>4. Watchmens’ call</td>
<td>4. Watchmen’s call</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5/5</td>
<td>3/3</td>
<td>5. British soldiers</td>
<td>5…. afterwards identified with British soldiers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/1</td>
<td>3/5</td>
<td>6. Roman theme. This theme is only suggested in fragments till the Triumph p.149iii</td>
<td>6. ‘Roman hosts’ … suggested in a fragmentary way, and not heard in its completeness until we come to the Roman triumph …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6/3</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>7. Britain! (fragment full tune appears on p.64)</td>
<td>7. a theme associated with Britain … at the mention of ‘our British coasts’, only partially presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7/6</td>
<td>5/1</td>
<td>8. Desolation!</td>
<td>8. ‘…our homesteads burn’ … may be styled the ‘Desolation’ theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11/5</td>
<td>8/6</td>
<td>Subsection 1</td>
<td>Mentions VS 9/9 as use of link</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/6</td>
<td>9/4</td>
<td>Subsection 2</td>
<td>Otherwise ignores these hints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/4</td>
<td>11/7</td>
<td>Fugato. 2 as counter sub.</td>
<td>A brief fugato … Ex. 1 as counter-subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/5</td>
<td>15/3</td>
<td>Climax of martial ‘idea’ (Elgar does not write ‘9’)</td>
<td>9. the culminating point of this choral march</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/3</td>
<td>15/8</td>
<td>Britain</td>
<td>… at which the ‘Britain theme’ (Ex. 7) is prominent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22/5</td>
<td>17/1</td>
<td>5. British soldiers</td>
<td>Coda in which Ex. 5 is heard (no epithet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/1</td>
<td>18/9</td>
<td>10. Rest</td>
<td>10. Call to the warriors to rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Column 1</td>
<td>Column 2</td>
<td>Column 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25/5</td>
<td>18/13</td>
<td>Watchmen 4 disguised!</td>
<td>-- in slightly varied form will not escape notice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26/6</td>
<td>19/7</td>
<td>11. peaceful meditation</td>
<td>11. suggestive of peaceful mediation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fig.22</td>
<td>13. Striving. Ardent</td>
<td>13. the king’s labours on behalf of his country … a subject … of a suitably ardent nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33/4</td>
<td>22/11</td>
<td>Circles ‘thund’ring car’ pointing to bass figure ‘The car!’</td>
<td>[No reference]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>24/7</td>
<td>‘The cars!’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38/5</td>
<td>25/1</td>
<td>Elgar snipped this out from another copy to put into sc. 5 of the MS vocal score</td>
<td>[Points this out at the start of Sc. 5]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39/6</td>
<td>25/11</td>
<td>Mixed with the car &amp; striving</td>
<td>[No reference]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26/9, 11</td>
<td>Britain, Caract.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43/10</td>
<td>28/2</td>
<td>15. this is what I call a conversation (domestic love) tune used to bring all else together</td>
<td>15. the orchestral substratum is largely developed out of the following melody [Ex. 15]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44/8</td>
<td>28/10</td>
<td>16. Orbin</td>
<td>16. the unseen presence of Orbin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48/10 fig.39</td>
<td>31/4</td>
<td>Peace (10) [sic: not ‘rest’]</td>
<td>[Mentions 10 and 11 – rest and peace suggested by the sentries’ call] paves way for more developed solo for Eigen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50/2</td>
<td>32/4</td>
<td>17. mistletoe (suggestion) in full on p. 46 [flute last beat]</td>
<td>17. the sacred mistletoe theme, to be more fully developed in the next scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50/4</td>
<td>32/6</td>
<td>18. Spell</td>
<td>18. It is closely connected with that of the Druid spell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50/6</td>
<td>32/8</td>
<td>19. Druid maiden suggestion in full on p. 48</td>
<td>19. The Druid maiden … only suggested but … quoted in the complete form it receives in the second scene [so music is from later scene]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52/1 fig.42</td>
<td>33/6</td>
<td>20. Prophetess</td>
<td>20. When her prophetic words are quoted .. a theme of graver significance …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52/3</td>
<td>33/8</td>
<td>21. Prophecy</td>
<td>21. … her actual words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53/3 fig.43</td>
<td>34/2</td>
<td>22. Taranis the God</td>
<td>22. Taranis, the Druidic Jupiter …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61/7 fig.50</td>
<td>38/9</td>
<td>23. Druids sacerdotal. In full p. 45</td>
<td>23. the sacerdotal nature of the Druids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64/9 fig.52</td>
<td>40/6</td>
<td>7 modified</td>
<td>Modification of the Britain theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66/5 fig.53</td>
<td>41/1</td>
<td>24. Peace</td>
<td>24. suggestive of peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sc. II</td>
<td>VS</td>
<td>Elgar</td>
<td>Thompson</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>72/1</td>
<td>45/1</td>
<td>Druids sacerdotal side now in full form (23)</td>
<td>… comparatively little that is new … 23 in complete form [no use of ‘sacerdotal’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sacred mistletoe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76/4 fig.4</td>
<td>47/6</td>
<td>25. Druids as Interpreters</td>
<td>25. interpreters of oracles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84/1 fig.8</td>
<td>51/10</td>
<td>26. Invocation to Taranis</td>
<td>26. Invocation to Taranis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84/5</td>
<td>52/1</td>
<td>Taranis (22: also notes 25, 17, 18 on this page)</td>
<td>[adds 19 to cover the whole section]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>87/2</td>
<td>54/4</td>
<td>22 worked out</td>
<td>Climax … based upon the development of the Taranis theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fig.10</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>88/3</td>
<td>55/4</td>
<td>Culmination</td>
<td>… after culminating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90/1</td>
<td>56/8</td>
<td>The reading of the omen. Spell (18) Orbin (16)</td>
<td>…interpretation of the omens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91/2</td>
<td>57/6</td>
<td>Interpreters (25) horror! (repeated VS p. 58 and 59)</td>
<td>disconnected chords  ['unpropitious’ not ‘horror’]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mistletoe [but circles the word ‘oak’]</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>99/1</td>
<td>61/7, 8</td>
<td>Soldiers (5) Carac. (3)</td>
<td>… allusions to their respective themes (2 and 5)</td>
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<td>fig.18</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>101/1</td>
<td>62/7</td>
<td>Culmination of the military idea</td>
<td>… military music of the first scene</td>
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<tr>
<td>104/6</td>
<td>64/7, 8</td>
<td>Circles ‘land’; Britain (7)</td>
<td>…the now fully developed Britain theme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106/4</td>
<td>65/6</td>
<td><strong>27. The sword (circles RH last 3 notes)</strong>&lt;sup&gt;iv&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td><strong>27. The fresh theme of the sword</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>107/1</td>
<td>65/12</td>
<td>(circles ‘Oak’) (17)</td>
<td><em>[ignores this hint!]</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>110/7</td>
<td>67/3</td>
<td>(circles ‘brand’) All [illegible] of the sword</td>
<td>‘Leap to the light’ … is entirely based on the sword motive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>117/8</td>
<td>70/9</td>
<td>(circles ‘we’) This is sarcastic</td>
<td>… his representative theme is more developed … a spice of sarcasm …</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118/5</td>
<td>71/1</td>
<td>Orbin (16) (in a rage)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118/8</td>
<td>71/4</td>
<td><strong>28. Orbin’s exaltation song</strong></td>
<td><strong>28. … his succeeding ‘heroic song’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120/7</td>
<td>72/8</td>
<td>(circles chorus: ‘The sword’) (27)</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122/5</td>
<td>73/11</td>
<td>Druids as priests (23)</td>
<td>Noted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123/1</td>
<td>73/15</td>
<td>(circles ‘my land’s defender’ 7 Britain</td>
<td>… <em>whose defender he would become</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>128/2</td>
<td>76/8</td>
<td>Orbin trans. character noble &amp; bold</td>
<td>… <em>his theme is heard in its completeness</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>129/2</td>
<td>77/1</td>
<td>Noisy accept.</td>
<td>.. <em>a strenuous accompaniment</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>Sentence</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>129/6</td>
<td>77/5</td>
<td>This is really the interpreters’ theme / idea (25)</td>
<td>… evolved from the theme of the Druids as interpreters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130/7</td>
<td>78/6</td>
<td>Orbin’s song of exaltation (28)</td>
<td>… the same melody as his former song</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135/1</td>
<td>81/6</td>
<td>Fierce counterpoint to Orbin’s song</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fig.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135/5</td>
<td>81/10</td>
<td>Maidens (19) fierce</td>
<td>19 … considerably changed in character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137/2</td>
<td>83/2-84/7</td>
<td>End of sword song</td>
<td>… choral march Ex. 9 (which Elgar does not note)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fig.53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140/1</td>
<td>84/11</td>
<td>Taranis invocation (26) and Druids (23)</td>
<td>… invocation to Taranis, with which the Druids’ sacerdotal theme is contrapuntally wovenvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140/5</td>
<td>85/2</td>
<td>Orbin’s song more remote (28)</td>
<td>… another combination is made of Orbin’s song and that of the soldiers (5)vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143/2</td>
<td>87/6</td>
<td>Orbin (16)</td>
<td>Orbin … a short orchestral Codavii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sc. III</td>
<td>144/1, 145/2</td>
<td>88/1 &amp; 9</td>
<td><strong>29.</strong> All forest sounds (written in our own woods) which I hope you will see someday</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>148/1 fig.5</td>
<td>90/1</td>
<td>This is hideous on the piano. Don’t say anything till you’ve heard the insts do it!viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[Thompson ignores this]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>148/5</td>
<td>90/5</td>
<td><strong>No marking from Elgar</strong>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>30. chorus of youths and maidens and</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>31. drone-like accompaniment</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>153/4 fig.10</td>
<td>95/1</td>
<td>Theme of chorus dying away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>[31b in my vs is my marking JR; HT ignores the ‘dying away’ counterpoint with 29a]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>154/6</td>
<td>95/9</td>
<td>Principal theme of this scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>32. the chief melodic phrase of the scene</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>155/2 fig.12</td>
<td>96/6</td>
<td>Subsidiary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>… <strong>the last member of the phrase 29a as a figure of accompaniment</strong>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161/12-13</td>
<td>100/1-2</td>
<td>Elgar circles ‘mail’, ‘weapons of fight’ (5, 27)</td>
<td>While noting these allusions, Thompson adds that the ‘garment of white’ – p. 99 – brings to mind Orbin’s sacerdotal office xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162/1</td>
<td>100/5</td>
<td>Elgar circles ‘sacred oak’, ‘dreaded rite’ (17, 18)</td>
<td>‘sacred oak’ calls for the mistletoe theme [etc.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162/6</td>
<td>100/10</td>
<td>2 your number (formerly 3) [= Caractacus]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>162/8</td>
<td>101/1</td>
<td>28 modified [diminution of Orbin’s exaltation JR]</td>
<td>Orbin’s song (slightly modified) and the Caractacus motive appear [but in reverse order]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>164/3</td>
<td>101/11</td>
<td>An attempt at a love tune with new acpt. (no numbers from here on!)</td>
<td>33. a more sustained melodic style to express heightened emotion … the music assumes a lyrical form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>166/4</td>
<td>103/1</td>
<td>Reprise of chorus with recits added</td>
<td>… dialogue, with a resumption of the opening chorus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>169/4 fig.24</td>
<td>106/1</td>
<td>Love tune / chorus [illiegible]</td>
<td>No reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>106/2</td>
<td>Chorus (dying away)</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170/5 fig.25</td>
<td>107/3</td>
<td>(30) Endless devotion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>170/9 fig.26</td>
<td>107/7</td>
<td>Principal theme again with varied accpt.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173/1</td>
<td>109/1</td>
<td>See p. 28 ‘Close by my side’*xii</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>173/3 fig.28</td>
<td>109/3</td>
<td>New subsidiary theme</td>
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<tr>
<td>176/1</td>
<td>110/8</td>
<td>Principal theme with 30 as counterpoint</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>176/2</td>
<td>111-2</td>
<td>These two pages are made up of previous themes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scene IV</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Malvern Hills</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>183/1</td>
<td>115/1 &amp; 4</td>
<td>Restless accpt. / This figure might be worth quoting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34. *A new subject …*

No comment

35. *… a fresh subsidiary theme at the mention of ‘summer suns’*

... the combination of the principal theme (Ex. 32) and a counterpoint evolved from Ex. 34, and the use of the forest themes (Ex. 29a and b) … deserve especial notice.

... a feeling of trouble and restlessness… this figure 36. is continually employed
<table>
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<tr>
<td>186/5</td>
<td>116/5-6</td>
<td></td>
<td>So sad. This might be worth quoting Evidently he didn’t think so, while noting other motives Elgar points out, e.g. 13, 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193/2</td>
<td>120/6</td>
<td></td>
<td>... a saddened echo of that passage [sc. I] as well as noting the druidic themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>193/7</td>
<td>120/11</td>
<td></td>
<td>Same themes “saddened”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>196/5</td>
<td>122/5</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Rome’ circled. See p.4 bass accept. 2nd line bar 2 The Roman theme bursts forth in a hurried crescendo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200/7</td>
<td>124/5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Active figure throughout 37. …a vigorous figure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fig.12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>204/1 &amp; 4</td>
<td>126/1 &amp; 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Lot of Roman theme see p. 4 &amp; 122/3 (your 2) Caractacus and Romans are heard in combination×iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>208/10</td>
<td>129/1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Battle tune 31 38. sustained battle melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fig.18</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>217/1</td>
<td>135/1</td>
<td></td>
<td>Rhythm suggested by the 1st line of words. (circles first notes of solo). The workings of my limited mind I cannot understand: on looking this thro’ it seems suggested by 26 &amp; the spirit of the Hill chorus (p. 41) line 2:– both things have a certain connection with the present 39. strange rhythm of seven crotchets is suggested by the first line of the words — The apparent connection between this melody and the Taranis theme [recte Invocation] (Ex.26) will be noticed, while it would seem as if the chorus of the Spirits of the</td>
</tr>
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<td>Reference</td>
<td>Note</td>
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<tr>
<td>224/2-3</td>
<td>141/3</td>
<td>(3rd 7.4 bar). Canonic</td>
<td>( \text{In the concluding bars ... it may be a satisfaction to some minds to notice the canonic treatment of the opening phrase})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scene V</td>
<td>The Severn</td>
<td>HT notes the lifting of bars from Sc.I</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225/5</td>
<td>142/5</td>
<td>The rolling stream of Habren (Severn). I made this on the banks of its [sic] rather like 32</td>
<td>(40. \text{LH only The stream of ‘sombre Habren (Severn) swirling by})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>225/7 fig.1</td>
<td>142/7</td>
<td>Prophecy fulfilled (21)</td>
<td>[No comment]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>226/5 fig. 2</td>
<td>143/2</td>
<td>? [page mutilated]</td>
<td>(41. \text{A fresh melody, which may be styled the ‘captives’ theme ... }^{xv})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>230/2 fig.6</td>
<td>147/2</td>
<td>(33)</td>
<td>[briefly summarises themes]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

situation but I did it unconsciously. EE.\(^{xiv}\)

\( \text{Hill (Scene I.) had not been out of the composer’s mind ... The dramatic propriety of this relationship is obvious ...} \)
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Scene VI</th>
<th>Rome. The triumphal procession</th>
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<td>235/6</td>
<td>Carillon [campanile in score]</td>
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<td>236/2</td>
<td>p. 23 bar 1 ‘Rome has heard’</td>
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<tr>
<td>150/14;</td>
<td>Carillon; ‘Roman flutes’ (is at fig. 4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>239–40</td>
<td>I can’t analyse this movement. it generally represents the noise &amp; glitter of the scene. At [4] (previous page) I intended the Roman flutes to be heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>246/3</td>
<td>33 Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>247/9</td>
<td>14 (Eigen)</td>
</tr>
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<td>fig.12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>257/3</td>
<td>First march theme in diminution</td>
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<tr>
<td>fig.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>261/4</td>
<td>Circles ‘Unbind’ (33).</td>
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<td>261/7</td>
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<td>262/8</td>
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<td>268/6</td>
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<td>271/2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| 280/8 | fig.42   | 178/10   | Rome (6) as accep. to recit. ...
|       |          |          | *accompanied by the Roman theme* |
| 282/3 | fig.44   | 179/15   | (15) retrospective ...
|       |          |          | *a kind of retrospect* |
| 291/4, |          | 187/3, 7 | Circles ‘eagle’s flight’ (6) and ‘oak’ (17) ...
| 292/1 |          |          | *noted* |
| 293/1 |          | 188/foot | (4) suggested by opening call of watchmen ...
|       |          |          | *suggested by the Watchmen’s call* ...
| 293/3 | fig.54   | 189/1    | Modern Britain. A March. Quote? Modern Britain *reiterated, p. 195, circling ‘her might’* ...
|       |          |          | *‘quote’ crossed out in pencil by HT?* March-like finale chiefly based on the ‘Britain’ theme (7) ignoring ‘Modern Britain’ |
| 296/1-2 |        | 191/5-6  | (circles ‘your dominion’) (7) |
| 297/5-8 |        | 192–3    | (circles ‘No slave’) A separate section (dolce) from this point to [60]; (circles ‘No trophy wet with tears’) |
| 300/1 | fig.60   | 195/3    | Modern Britain (circles ‘her might’) |
| 301/4 |          | 196/5    | Britain glorious |
Elgar Birthplace Museum MS 1440. Note that Thompson received the score in two fascicles, which in EBM MS1440 have separate title-pages. The second fascicle, starting with scene 3, has even-numbered pages on the recto, and odd on the verso, showing it to be a provisional score prepared for Elgar’s use, and Thompson’s. The other proof copy (EBM Ms 982.1) is only the first scene.

Most of Elgar’s entries are no more than the numbers of themes in the margin. These references are mostly omitted in the table, although they provided Thompson with a short cut to an analysis. Elgar seems particularly to point out ‘Carac[tacus]’ when it appears; on seeing the first part of the analysis he begins to write ‘3 your 2’ for this theme and adds the (usually abbreviated) name of the king to make sure. This table is concerned only with words, not with the music-dramatic consequences of Elgar’s self-analysis, so most of his numerical annotations are not included here.

These and similar notes suggest that although Elgar sent the first two scenes well ahead of the rest, he presumably had the entire VS at this disposal, but had not finished proof-reading beyond scene 2.

Circling ‘brand’ Elgar’s note seems to read ‘all [?illegible] of the sword’, so pointing to accompaniment using sword motive. Curiously the notes he rings are placed a quaver earlier in the VS than in the FS, where this bar has the 2 sq anacrusis like all the other sword references.

Not so common instance of Thompson elaborating on Elgar’s note.

Elgar also points out (5) among other motives. But here the point is that Thompson has not mentioned Elgar’s idea of Orbin’s song being ‘remote’.

Neither mentions the Allargando and, I would say, grandiose treatment of Orbin, and the furious final bar; Elgar perhaps because it’s obvious, Thompson because his focus is on the formal aspect – the Coda.

Not so labelled, but a version of the Caractacus motive.

NB this suggests Elgar is more concerned with Leitmotivs than with the numbers of examples! However, he has no motive 30.

Very analytical, Mr T! especially as this is metrically quite different.

Problem here: in the annotated VS pp. 98–9 are missing. So it’s likely Elgar himself pointed this out.

Recte ‘close at my side’, a remote thematic resemblance.

Well done again.
xiv At the foot of the page, under the ‘no accent .. on the fourth crotchet’ printed not, Elgar writes: As a matter of fact the secondary accent is sometimes on the 4th but more often on the 5th crot[he].

xv This is Elgar’s label; although the relevant part of the page is missing he labels the theme 33 on pp. 147 and 155.