

## Thematic Interrelationships between the Works of Varèse

BY

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A hitherto unexplored aspect of Varèse's music is his use of thematic quotations to create links between his works. The pitched material of Varèse's music is often similar in character, so that some intervallic patterns recur frequently. This paper, however, concerns three occasions upon which Varèse used specific thematic cross-references to link pieces. Even when not identical, these cross-references are so similar that it is obvious that their use was intentional. Another important factor in two of the three examples to be discussed is Varèse's use of musical material from non-Varèsian sources. In each case I shall attempt to explain the circumstances that caused Varèse to link the works involved.

The idea of including symbolic references to his own and to other composers' work may (like so many of his other ideas) have occurred to Varèse through his contact with Busoni. Thematic cross-references are found throughout Busoni's work. Of the six *Elegies* (1907), for example, which Busoni had just completed as Varèse's period of study commenced, no. 2 (*All' Italia! In modo napolitano*) was taken from the fourth movement of the piano Concerto (1903) and no. 4 (*Turandot Frauengemach: Intermezzo*) was an extended arrangement of the fifth piece of the *Turandot Suite* (1904). In turn the *Elegies* gave rise to later pieces, no. 3 (the chorale prelude *Meine Seele bangt und hofft zu dir . . .*) reappearing in *Fantasia contrappuntistica* (1910). Busoni also used material from other sources; for example, both the *Indianische Fantasie* (1913) and *Indianisches Tagebuch* (1915) include themes based on the songs of North-American Indians, and *Turandot* (1917) makes systematic use of oriental motifs.

TABLE I

PRINCIPAL SURVIVING WORKS BY VARÈSE (1883-1965) AND OTHERS REFERRED TO IN THIS PAPER

<i>Un grand sommeil noir</i>	1905	Voice and piano
<i>Bourgogne</i>	1908	Orchestra (destroyed by Varèse, 1960)
<i>Les cycles du nord</i>	1912	Orchestra (lost, 1914)
<i>Amériques</i>	1920-1921	Orchestra
<i>Offrandes</i>	1921	Soprano and small orchestra
<i>Hyperprism</i>	1922-1923	Small orchestra
<i>Octandre</i>	1923	Eight instruments
<i>Intégrales</i>	1924-1925	Small orchestra
<i>Arcana</i>	1925-1927	Orchestra
<i>Ionisation</i>	1930-1931	Percussion ensemble of thirteen players
<i>Ecuatorial</i>	1933-1934	Bass chorus and small orchestra
<i>Density 21.5</i>	1936	Flute
<i>Etude pour Espace</i>	1947	Soprano and tenor, chorus, piano and percussion (withheld)
<i>Déserts</i>	1953-1954	Wind, brass, piano and percussion and three interpolations of electronically organized sound
<i>Poème électronique</i>	1957-1958	Electronically organized sound
<i>Nocturnal</i>	1957-1965	Soprano and small orchestra (unfinished, completed by Chou Wen-chung from a version performed in 1961)

The first and most extensive of the examples of thematic cross-reference in Varèse's music is found between *Amériques* and *Offrandes*. Although the interrelationships between the two works is so complex that their genesis appears to be inextricably interwoven, it is known that *Amériques* was begun first—in 1920—and that *Offrandes* was started the following year after *Amériques* had been completed (see Table I). It is *Offrandes* that makes use of material from *Amériques* and not *vice versa*.

The uses of material from *Amériques* are listed in Table II. *Amériques* was first published, by J. Curwen and Sons, Ltd. of London, in 1925 and *Offrandes* by C. C. Birchard and Co. of Boston in 1927. Both publications have since been replaced by more modern editions that incorporate major revisions made to *Amériques* in 1927 and an alteration to the end of *Offrandes*. Not all the original interrelationships can therefore now be found in the modern editions.

Most of the references occur in the middle of each movement. The references are found only in the instrumental sections; the vocal part is always an independent line, even when every other element in the texture is derived from *Amériques*. An interesting feature is the difference in the style of the references between the two movements of *Offrandes*. The references in *Chanson de là-haut* are tentative, with clear quotations only from subsidiary material and a number of cases of passages in which only similarities can be traced. In *La croix du sud* the references are all definite and often to important thematic material. References from *Amériques* are combined to form a passage of 22 successive bars, and the main climax of the movement is reached with the clearest allusion to *Amériques*, one of its main themes. It is as though Varèse grew more confident of the interrelationship between the two works as the composition of *Offrandes* progressed.

A major question in Varèse's life in 1921 was whether he should return to his native France or remain in the United States of America. Up to this time Varèse had led an unsettled life; born in Paris in 1883, he had spent his early years in Burgundy and then in Paris, before the family moved to Turin in 1892. In 1903 Varèse had left his home in Italy and returned to Paris, where he studied at the Conservatoire and the Schola Cantorum. From late in 1907 he lived in Berlin until the outbreak of the first World War forced him to return to France. The war was also responsible for his decision to go to America, and he arrived in New York in December, 1915, originally intending to stay only for a few weeks. Although Varèse remained a resident of the United States of America for the rest of his life, he felt his ties with Paris strongly throughout the 1920s, returning there for progressively longer visits in 1922, 1924 and 1925 and for a long stay between 1928 and 1933. Of his visit to Paris in 1924, Madame Louise Varèse wrote in her biography:

... in spite of all the derogatory things he had said about Paris and Parisianism, I saw that he was very much affected the day he arrived in his native city. Pilgrimages to his old haunts began at once and before leaving Paris there was not a street where he had lived, nor a café nor a bistro once frequented, that I was not shown.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Louise Varèse, *Varèse: A Looking-Glass Diary* (London, 1972), i. p. 215.

TABLE II MATERIAL FROM AMÉRIQUES USED IN OFFRANDES			
		Amériques	
		I Chanson de là-haut	
Identical references	Offrandes		
	Bar 1 and 6	Figure 7	Bassoon and at clarinet
	Bar 1	Figure 33*	Trombones (slight changes)
	Bar 3	Figure 26	Strings
		II La croix du sud	
	Bar 1 and 6	Figure 7	Bassoon and at clarinet
	Bar 1	Figure 33*	Trombones (slight changes)
	Bar 3	Figure 26	Strings
	Bar 3 to 6	Opening Figure 6	Harp and at (Figure 6 Bar 18) strings

TABLE II  
MATERIAL FROM AMÉRIQUES USED IN OFFRANDES

Offrandes		Amériques	
I <i>Chanson de la-haut</i>			
Identical references			
1. Figure 2	Bar 1 and 6	Figure 7	Bassoon and at clarinet
2. Figure 6	Bar 6	Figure 33*	
3. Figure 5	Bar 1	Figure 26	Trombones (slight changes)
3. Figure 5	Bar 3	Figure 26	Strings
Important material, altered but originating from Amériques			
4. Figure 1	Bar 3 to 3	Opening	Harp and at
Figure 5	Bar 3	Figure 6	(Figure 6 Bar 18) strings
Figure 6	Bar 5 to 4	Figure 12	Harp and strings
	Bar 4	Figure 12	
II <i>La croix du sud</i>			
Identical references			
6. Figure 2	Bars 1 to 8	Figure 8	Trombones then bassoons and horns
7. Figure 3	Bars 1 to 4	Figure 9	<i>Tutti</i>
8. Figure 3	Bars 5 to 6	Figure 3	Cellos and basses
9. Figure 3	Bar 7 to 2	Figure 4	Trumpets (2), piccolo, and clarinet
Figure 4	Bar 2	Figure 6	(E flat), and
		Figure 54	(Figure 6 Bars 28 to 29)
10. Figure 4	Bars 3 to 6	Figure 6	(Figure 49 Bars 1 to 3)
Important material, altered but originating from Amériques		Figure 54	(Figure 6 Bars 31 to 34) and
11. Figure 6	Bars 4 to 5	Figure 18	(Figure 49 Bars 4 to 7) <i>Tutti</i>
	Bar 7		Oboe, cor anglais and heckelphone
	Bar 11*		

\* = A passage removed by later revisions  
( ) = The source (where different) in the modern edition of Amériques.

## NOTES TO TABLE II

- Reference 4: Both passages use alternating minor 3rds.  
 Reference 5: Both passages use harp chords against muted strings.  
 Reference 6: A "chorale", a semitone lower than upon its first appearance in Amériques, with a new continuation derived from figure 6, bars 14 to 15, a passage repeated at figure 54 to introduce the final climax of the work, to which the Offrandes quotation may refer.  
 Reference 9: This idea is the thematic link between the beginning and the end of the original version of the second movement of Offrandes. It is identical to the motif from Amériques both rhythmically and in its overall pitch-content, but the internal order of the pitches has been rearranged to give a different melodic outline. Similar transformations occur in Amériques and, although most of this material was cut in the later revisions, one example survives which can be found in the modern edition at figure 23, bar 4 (horns).

By 1920 Varèse had become sufficiently part of the New World to be inspired by its drive and energy to compose *Amériques*. The inspirational force that produced *Offrandes*, however, was rather different. *Offrandes* (the French for "offerings") was originally called *Dédications* and was first given under that title in 1922, the first work of Varèse to be performed in America and in which Varèse played the cymbal. The first title, *Dédications*, originates in Varèse's admiration for the two dedicatees, his American wife Louise and his close friend the harpist Carlos Salzedo. In the spring and summer of 1921 Louise went on a visit to Paris. Whilst she was in Paris, Varèse dreamt that he was in a telephone booth talking to her:

His body became so light, so immaterial, so evanescent that suddenly, limb by limb, he disintegrated and flew away to Paris, where he was reconstituted, as though all his being had become spirit. This singular experience, in a dream, of another duration and another space haunted him for a long while.<sup>2</sup>

This incorporeal experience linking the old world and the new seems to be reflected in the atmospheric, mysterious sonorities of *Offrandes*. It also infuses the later unfinished vocal works *Etude pour Espace* and *Nocturnal*—works that, like *Offrandes*, make use of soaring solo soprano lines to create the disembodied feeling of "another duration and another space".

In Paris Louise met the Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro, liked his poetry and sent some of it to Varèse, who chose one poem, *Chanson de là-haut*, to set as the first movement of *Offrandes*. Hence it was natural for Varèse to dedicate that movement to his wife. The second poem, *La croix du sud*, Varèse chose himself. The text was by Jose Tablada, a Mexican poet who had been living in New York since 1914. That movement was dedicated to Carlos Salzedo, whose influence is felt throughout the work (and also in *Amériques*) by the use Varèse made of the many new effects that Salzedo had discovered could be obtained from the harp.

Both poems are in a similar style to that in which Varèse wrote his own poetry, a style strongly influenced by the Symbolist poets. They are couched in an evocative language in which the physical sound of the words is important, without a coherent line of developing thought, but with a meaning implied by an individual word or phrase, which gradually induces in the reader an awareness of the poet's intentions, coloured by his own experience.

The opening stanza of the first poem offered Varèse the opportunity to exploit the relationship between the old world and the new. The opening line, "The Seine is asleep in the shadow of its bridges", would have conjured up memories of his native France, whilst the next three lines:

I watch Earth spinning  
And I sound my trumpet  
Towards all the seas.

would have reflected his present situation half-way across the world. This conflict between the two cultures is also evident in the music. Between the first and second

<sup>2</sup> Fernand Ouellette, *A Biography of Edgard Varèse*, trans. Derek Coltman (New York, 1968), p. 74.

lines Varèse includes *Marseillaise* (Ex. 1) and *Amériques*.

Ex. 1 *Offrandes*



Varèse would a "and frisk dresses orchestral work he of the aurora bor American way of l

Once again at this from *Amériques* is (9 in Table II), th

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lines Varèse included a reference to France in the form of a fragment of the *Marseillaise* (Ex. 1), and the stanza ends with the first obvious use of material from *Amériques*.

Ex. 1 *Offrandes*, fig. 4



Varèse would also have found a similar relationship in the second poem. The line "and frisk dressed in the aurora borealis" would have recalled for Varèse an orchestral work he wrote in Europe in 1912, *Les cycles du nord*, inspired by the sight of the aurora borealis. This line is immediately followed by a reference to the American way of life:

In the sky there is a sign,  
Oleomargarine.

Once again at this point of transition between the old world and the new, material from *Amériques* is introduced prominently, culminating in the most direct reference (9 in Table II), the use of one of the main themes of the earlier work.

It would seem, therefore, that *Offrandes* may have originated out of the conflict Varèse felt between his European heritage and his new life in America, a situation the more emphasized by the fact that his American wife was at that time in Paris. The relationship between the text and the material from *Amériques* enables one to state that passages from *Amériques* were not introduced into *Offrandes* simply to ease difficulties of composition and speed completion but with a specific purpose as a symbolic use of material associated with the new world, resulting from Varèse's own interpretation of the text inspired by a personal experience he characteristically did not choose to reveal.

The use of material from *Amériques* is the only element of formal unity between the two movements of *Offrandes*. There are no direct thematic relationships and even the methods of formal organization are completely different, for the first movement is based on a sequence of pitch-centres and the second movement is based on an underlying sequence of unpitched percussion sonorities. These differences have led some authorities to remark that *Offrandes* is "more or less two different works", whereas it is in fact one work with two movements related by a common theme.

The other two examples of thematic cross-reference are simpler in essence, being straightforward thematic quotations, although to find explanations for their occurrence is just as difficult as tracing the relationship between *Amériques* and *Offrandes*, since Varèse never commented on or offered any explanation for their appearance. The first of them is also between two successive works: *Intégrales*, begun in 1924 and completed in 1925, and *Arcana*, begun in 1925 and finished in 1927.

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the first and second

Ex. 2 *Arcana*, fig. 9 bars 2-3

Ex. 3 *Intégrales*, fig. 3 bars 2-3

The reference in *Arcana* is taken from the long, repetitive second part of the opening section of *Intégrales* (beginning at figure 3). From Exx. 2 and 3 it can be seen that, on its first use in *Arcana*, the opening pitch pattern, its harmonic support and basic timbre are identical. There are also strong similarities between the percussion textures that accompany both passages. The complete motif in *Arcana* (Ex. 2) is closest in character to a brief development of Ex. 3 that occurs in *Intégrales* at figure 4, bars 4 and 5 (Ex. 4). The passage from *Intégrales* includes a prominent trombone motif (Ex. 5), and this also occurs in the passage in *Arcana* at figure 9, bar 5 (Ex. 6).

The direct references to *Intégrales* occur in a short sequence in *Arcana* and are listed in Table III. The material is subjected to considerable development, and gradually it is so transformed that its close relationship with *Intégrales* is lost and it forms one strand in the complex web of motivic patterns that is the basis of *Arcana*. Nevertheless, its influence permeates much of the work and it occasionally returns in a recognizable guise, as at figure 38, where it is used to introduce one of the main climaxes at the end of the work.

Varèse worked on *Arcana* whilst on a visit to France in 1925 and he referred to the work in several of his letters home. At that time there was a prospect of a performance of *Arcana* in February, 1926 at a concert in Carnegie Hall to be conducted by Stokowski. Varèse realized that *Arcana* would not be finished by then and resisted Salzedo's suggestion that he should use smaller orchestral resources similar to those of *Intégrales*. In view of the thematic links between the two works it is interesting to find that Varèse felt oppressed by the limitations of the small ensemble and was determined to write on a more ambitious scale whether the work were performed or not:

Unfortunately *Arcana* care. What counts arguments—that the isn't played anyway I write as I feel . . .

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(1) Figure 9 Bars 2 to

(2) Figure 12 Bars 5 to

(3) Figure 14 Bars 1 to

(4) Figure 15 Bar 1

The desire to write Varèse's early life. . . works like *Hyperprism* first emerged, he was full orchestral resources *Amérique* and *Arcana*

<sup>3</sup> Louise Varèse, *op. cit.*

Unfortunately *Arcanes* will be for large orchestra . . . so I won't be played . . . and I don't care. What counts is that I work for myself. Make Carlos understand—I know his arguments—that there's no difference between writing for a small or a large orchestra. One isn't played anyway—and besides I'm fed up with the limitations of small combinations . . . I write as I feel . . . my time will come. . . .<sup>3</sup>

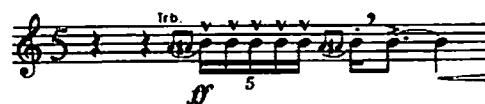
Ex. 4 *Intégrales*, fig. 4 bars 4-5Ex. 5 *Intégrales*, fig. 3 bar 6Ex. 6 *Arcana*, fig. 9 bar 6

TABLE III

MATERIAL FROM *INTÉGRALES* USED IN *ARCANA*

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|----------------------------|--|
| (1) Figure 9 Bars 2 to 7   | <i>ff</i> Eight horns and a heckelphone. The first use at the same pitch and with the original harmonic background of <i>Intégrales</i> . Trombone motif (Ex. 6) at figure 9 bar 6.  |
| (2) Figure 12 Bars 5 to 13 | <i>pp</i> Two horns and a contrabassoon. Transposed down a tone and rhythmic character considerably altered. Different harmonic background.  |
| (3) Figure 14 Bars 1 to 10 | <i>ff</i> Four horns, heckelphone, two clarinets and violas. Transposed up a minor 3rd. Rhythmic character as (1), although upbeat figure missing on first appearance. Different harmonic background. Trombone motif at figure 14 bar 11 (transposed and altered). |
| (4) Figure 15 Bar 1        | <i>mf</i> Heckelphone and violas. An echo of (3) but with a different harmonic background.   |

The desire to write for full orchestra is an important thread running through Varèse's early life. Although Varèse is now more remembered for smaller-scale works like *Hyperprism*, *Octandre* and *Intégrales*, in which the pure Varèsian style first emerged, he was always ambitious in his artistic aims and frequently wrote for full orchestral resources. At least nine orchestral works are known by name but only *Amériques* and *Arcana* survive today.

<sup>3</sup> Louise Varèse, *op. cit.*, p. 239.





important moments. The opening theme of the work is first announced in a 7/4 bar, and in the first section that theme occurs seven times. The use of septuplet figures, though not common, is reserved for points of climax, as with the 7/4 bar four bars after figure 38 (the *tutti* introduced by the *Intégrales* reference), where the percussive reiteration of Ex. 7 by the brass against the full orchestra is found.

Ex. 7 *Arcana*, fig. 38 bar 4



An analysis of the works composed on either side of *Arcana* shows that Varèse was using numerical relationships in his work at this time, not just superficially but fundamentally to affect the structure and proportions of a work. Both the second section of *Intégrales* and the whole of *Ionisation* have an underlying structure in which the relative lengths of sections have been calculated according to various numerical ratios. Although such a strict use of proportions is not detectable in *Arcana* it is possible to detect a similar process at work in the creation of seven motivic cells from which the whole of the material is derived. Others who have analysed *Arcana* have come to this conclusion independently of my own work.<sup>7</sup> Such a structure would have provided Varèse with a basic conception that he could relate to Paracelsus and *Arcana*. It fits in with the numerous important occurrences of the figure 7 already described and accounts for the remarkable character of the work, an unbroken stream of material continually being transformed into new ideas. Of the seven motivic cells in the work, six are introduced in the opening section: four pitched cells (including the opening theme and the two fanfares) and two that are initially purely rhythmic in character (one of which in an augmented form becomes the septuplet motif). The seventh motivic cell occurs at the start of the second section. It is the theme from *Intégrales*, and it can be considered as the catalyst taken from his earlier work that begins the process of development and transmutation.

The transmutation of elements was the aim of Paracelsus, and Varèse also used the term "transmutation" to describe his own techniques of composing with sound:

When new instruments will allow me to write music as I conceive it, taking the place of linear counterpoint, the movement of sound-masses, of shifting planes, will be clearly perceived. When these sound-masses collide, the phenomena of penetration or repulsion will seem to occur. Certain transmutations taking place on certain planes will seem to be projected onto other planes, moving at different speeds and at different angles. There will no longer be the old conception of melody or interplay of melodies. The entire work will be a melodic totality. The entire work will flow as a river flows.<sup>8</sup>

Although Varèse wrote this nine years after the composition of *Arcana*, when his concept of transmutation had become more sophisticated (he is here describing

<sup>7</sup> Anne Florence Parks, "Freedom, Form and Process in Varèse" (diss., Cornell University, 1974).

<sup>8</sup> Edgard Varèse, Lecture at Mary Austin House, Santa Fe, 1936.

techniques he was to use in *Déserts*), the concept is also fundamental to *Arcana*. In *Arcana* the repetition of thematic material to provide formal coherence is kept to a bare minimum. After its sevenfold repetition in the first section, the opening theme returns in its original form just twice more to herald the start of new sections of the work. Apart from this, *Arcana* is a work where material is subjected to continual change and development. The process of transmutation can be seen at work, for example, with the changes to the material from *Intégrales* listed in Table III. Similar, though not so extensive, examples of transmutation can be found in the works preceding *Arcana*. These were ideas that were already occurring to Varèse. The synthesis of these ideas in a large-scale orchestral work was a logical step in Varèse's creative evolution, and the awareness of their occurrence in the work of Paracelsus would have provided the impetus to, but not the origin of, their expression in *Arcana*.

Varèse's growing awareness of the principles of transmutation may also account for one of the most curious features of *Arcana*: a substantial number of reminiscences of or references to the works of other composers. These are listed in Table IV. No reference is exact; each is transformed in some way, usually to create an intensification—for example, by a change of timbre or by replacing a single pitch by a dissonant chord. Many of the references come from the first few bars of a work or movement: that from Debussy is one of the main motifs of *Pelléas et Mélisande*. The references are usually produced by the transmutation of material in *Arcana*. Ex. 10, for example, is derived from the main theme of *Arcana*, Ex. 8 (the structure of semitone-tone in the upper line is inverted), yet it is also a version of Ex. 9.

Such references seem much too obvious to be subconscious. That Varèse did refer consciously to other pieces is shown by Ex. 1. It is possible, particularly in a work with extra-musical associations relating to the transmutation of elements, that Varèse included them deliberately to create a layer of meaning of purely personal relevance. All the references are from works Varèse would have known in his formative years. If one had to name the two composers whose style Varèse transmuted into his own it would be difficult to find more suitable candidates than Debussy and Stravinsky as those from whom the references are taken. That parallels with extra-musical concepts could and did inspire Varèse is shown by his image of the river in relation to musical form and by the way in which he was affected by powerful dream experiences. The references to *Intégrales* therefore may also have

TABLE IV  
REFERENCES IN *ARCANA* TO THE WORKS OF OTHER COMPOSERS\*

Three bars before	Figure 5	Stravinsky	<i>Firebird</i> , "Danse infernale du roi Kastchei", bars 3 to 10
	Figure 9	Stravinsky	<i>Petrushka</i> , "Le tour de passe-passe", figure 30
Figure 13 to	Figure 14	Debussy	<i>Pelléas et Mélisande</i> , Act I scene i, bars 5 to 6
	Figure 17	Stravinsky	<i>Petrushka</i> , figure 32
Two bars before	Figure 19	Stravinsky	<i>Le sacre du printemps</i> , figure 72
	Figure 20	Stravinsky	<i>Firebird</i> , "Danse infernale du roi Kastchei"
Five bars after	Figure 24	Stravinsky	<i>Petrushka</i> , figure 32

\* Larry Stempel, "Not even Varèse can be an orphan", *The Musical Quarterly* (January, 1974), p. 52.

been included for the same reason as an artistic parallel to the previous work.

The final example of a thematic reference involves two works composed by Varèse. The thematic material of *Ecuatorial* is a motivic outline of the main theme of the eighth bar. This reference could not occur at figure 10, the main theme of *Amérique*.

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Ex. 9 Stravinsky.



There is nothing in the thematic reference to *Amérique*. Unlike the thematic or motivic use in *Amérique*, it is transitory, and indeed Varèse was familiar with its origin, as it must once again have been.

*Ecuatorial* was Varèse's first work. He had used similar material again in *Déserts*. The principle of the two works, however, was not the same. It can be divided into three sections: the first voice part (a solo bass in the first section) and the second and third sections. The first text is an incantation to the Guatemalan poet and novelist, hence Varèse's choice of *Ecuatorial* comes from three sources. The number of repeated phrases in both the second and third

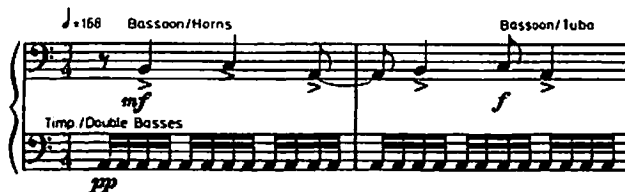
been included for the same reason as the references to other composers—as part of an artistic parallel to the process by which base metals are transmuted into gold.

The final example of a thematic interrelationship is the most remarkable in that it involves two works composed thirteen years apart: *Amériques* and *Ecuatorial*. Much of the thematic material of *Ecuatorial* is similar to that of Varèse's earlier works. The motivic outline of the main theme of *Intégrales*, for example, can be found in the eighth bar. This reference could be explained as a subconscious recollection, but one that cannot occur at figure 9, bars 7–9, where there is a brief but clear reference to the main theme of *Amériques*, together with its countersubject (see Exx. 11 and 12).

Ex. 8 *Arcana*, bar 1



Ex. 9 Stravinsky: *The Firebird*, "Danse infernale du roi Kastchei", bars 3–4



There is nothing in the text of *Ecuatorial* at this point that would explain the reference to *Amériques*. Unlike the previous example of cross-reference, no further thematic or motivic use is made of this material. Its occurrence is brief and transitory, and indeed Varèse could scarcely have expected any of his audience to be familiar with its origin, as *Amériques* had received very few performances. Its use must once again have been only of personal significance for the composer.

*Ecuatorial* was Varèse's first use of a title with geographical connotations since *Amériques*. He had used such titles before—for example, *Bourgogne*—and was to again in *Déserts*. The principal reason that would have suggested a link between the two works, however, was musical, the use of a similar formal structure. *Ecuatorial* can be divided into three sections, the first a substantial introduction before the voice part (a solo bass in the original version but subsequently a bass chorus) enters, and the second and third sections each setting one of the two verses of the text. The text is an incantation to the Mayan gods, which Varèse found in a book by the Guatemalan poet and novelist Miguel Angel Asturias, *Legends of Guatemala*—hence Varèse's choice of the title *Ecuatorial*. The musical material of the work comes from three sources. Firstly, the incantatory nature of the text gives rise to a number of repeated phrases that create some links between the verses. Secondly, both the second and third sections have their own internal thematic structure; a

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#### COMPOSERS\*

Danse infernale du  
si", bars 3 to 10  
"Le tour de  
:", figure 30  
*Mélisande*, Act I  
rs 5 to 6  
figure 32  
printemps, figure 72  
Danse infernale du roi  
figure 32

y (January, 1974), p. 52.

Ex. 10 *Arcana*, fig. 4 bars 7-8

Ex. 11 *Amériques*, bar 3

phrase that occurs near the beginning is recalled at the end of the section. Thirdly, the introduction presents a number of thematic fragments that recur during the second section in a random order but, in the third section, in an order that corresponds to their position in the introduction. The main theme of *Amériques* occurs at the beginning of the third section as if to establish that more logical method of organization, a method Varèse had used in the earlier work.

Although *Amériques* is a very complex score it does have an underlying logical organization based on the idea of material being projected forward from one section into a similar position in another but expanded section, a process repeated for the third, final and longest section of all. Thus the material that separates the statements of the main theme of *Amériques* in its first section recurs in the same order in the next section, separated by new material that is itself projected forward within the section. The programme notes for the first performance of *Amériques* hinted at this structure:

The forward movement of the score could be represented as a series of varied and continual displacements of levels and volumes of sound around a number of solid pivots which support the composition's framework without themselves being apparent.<sup>9</sup>

Varèse's substantial revisions to the score of *Amériques* clarified the underlying structure somewhat, but the result is still such a profusion of thematic ideas that formal incoherence is inevitable. Varèse's architectonic solution may have originated in an attempt to capture the feeling of expansion that characterized America in the early twentieth century as the continent was explored and developed. Of the title Varèse wrote:

<sup>9</sup> Fernand Ouellette, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

I did not think of the discoveries—new worlds

And in defence of the w

It is often said that I am t

His use of a similar geom works, a link symbolized point at which *Ecuador Amériques*.

Ex. 12

Varèse was one of the his case were usually trau 1920s the reception of hi literal interpretation of conjured up for many : intended: "the interpreta the expressive aims of h increased the controvers have discussed the links t by the thematic cross-r processes of creation, an evidence available. Nev Varèse subscribed to Bu repetitions when his next of clear and tangible linl

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of*

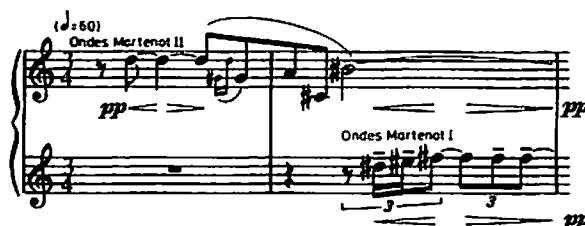
I did not think of the title *Amériques* as purely geographic but as symbolic of discoveries—new worlds on earth, in the sky, or in the minds of men.<sup>10</sup>

And in defence of the work after its controversial first performance he wrote:

It is often said that I am bringing geometric elements into the field of music.<sup>11</sup>

His use of a similar geometric design in *Ecuatorial* created a link between the two works, a link symbolized by a thematic cross-reference that occurs precisely at the point at which *Ecuatorial* begins to employ formal principles used earlier in *Amériques*.

Ex. 12 *Ecuatorial*, fig. 9 bars 7-8



Varèse was one of those composers for whom the processes of creation (which in his case were usually traumatic) ceased to matter once the piece was finished. In the 1920s the reception of his work was plagued by misunderstandings caused by a too literal interpretation of his music. The use of sirens in *Amériques*, for example, conjured up for many a sound-picture of New York rather than what Varèse intended: "the interpretation of a mood".<sup>12</sup> Varèse's comments therefore concerned the expressive aims of his music and he avoided any statements that would have increased the controversy that surrounded his work. As a result he never seems to have discussed the links that he obviously felt existed between his works represented by the thematic cross-references I have cited. They originate in his personal processes of creation, and the reasons for their use have to be inferred from the evidence available. Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence to show that, while Varèse subscribed to Busoni's dictum that "a creator should . . . not be drawn into repetitions when his next work shall be in the making",<sup>13</sup> he often made creative use of clear and tangible links with his earlier music.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

<sup>13</sup> Ferruccio Busoni, *Sketch of a New Esthetic of Music*, trans. T. Baker (New York, 1962).