

Array of Irrevocable Light

What is known cannot be unknown. What is done cannot be undone. With due respect to Goethe, Faustian bargains seldom conclude with angels and absolution. In reality, our collective Faustian bargains seldom conclude.

We rely on the light of science to dispel darkness, but conveniently ignore the long shadows cast by scientific illumination. We attempt to navigate ethical shadows with the light of religion or faith, but we abdicate our reason and moral responsibility when we defer our consciences to secondhand dogmas commingled with the prevailing consensus of our time. Curiously, both science and religion appeal to nature, which offers its own distinctive forms of light.

The isolation and austere beauty of the American southwest invites thought, spiritual awakening, and exploration. From the top of a mesa, you can witness light and darkness playing across the mountains, sands, and valleys. If you assemble enough minds together on one mesa, you can determine history. -Such was the case with the Los Alamos Laboratory during the Second World War.

On July 16, 1945, scientists detonated the first atomic weapon in New Mexico's aptly named *Jornada del Muerto* valley. According to Brigadier General T. F. Farrell, "The whole country was lighted by a searing light with the intensity many times that of the midday sun. It was golden, purple, violet, gray, and blue. It lighted every peak, crevasse, and ridge of the nearby mountain range with a clarity and beauty that cannot be described, but must be seen to imagine."

Physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer simply indicated, "It worked." Later, in discussing the detonation, Oppenheimer would reference the 11th chapter of the Hindu scriptures, the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna reveals himself as a many-splendored deity with the radiance of a thousand suns. Krishna urges Prince Arjuna that it is his duty as a warrior to take arms against an army that includes relatives and friends. Arjuna worships and complies.

Oppenheimer complied with his own perceived duty of fathering the atom bomb, but found himself echoing Krishna's revelatory words with heaviness rather than exalted jubilation: "Now I am become Death, destroyer of worlds."

What is known cannot be unknown. What is done cannot be undone. We exchange light for darkness, radiance for sadness, lucidity for madness. We perpetuate an array of irrevocable light.

-David Wallace, July 6, 2016

Array of Irrevocable Light was commissioned with the inaugural Robert & Qin Ryan Foundation Composition Grant Award in conjunction with the Mark Wood Rock Orchestra Camp and Music Festival. The work was composed in Boston from January to July of 2016 and received its premiere performance on Tuesday, July 12, 2016 at the Bell Cultural Events Center at MidAmerica Nazarene University in Olathe, Kansas.

In terms of effects, *Array of Irrevocable Light* requires a minimum of one delay pedal, which is constantly set at 1111 milliseconds (54 beats per minute). An octave generator and a distortion pedal will greatly enhance the impact of the climactic section, and reverb will improve the overall ambience.