



Source: Rosie Anderson, "'Does that sound arrogant?'," *The Guardian online*, 05/09/05.

Tags: [intimacy](#), [religion](#)

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[...]

After dark you pass the night waiting for her to wake. You wait for it to grow light and with it for her to wake with the light. Her light or dawn rather than your own. It could not be anything but silent and still, and this absence pronounces something of the distance that is determined between the two of you.

You are conscious of her at rest when you rise and of her rising when you are at rest. And vice versa. Give or take. And it is in these few moments when the two of you are alert to the world simultaneously that you endeavour to construct common ground. A few moments of what you think of as a manifestation of dusk, whatever the time of day. Or dawn. A grey shade between day and night. Or night and day, depending on where you find yourself, from where you mark any hypothetical journey.

Moreover, the extended cycles of your worlds are at odds. Day for night. Summer for winter. Even east for west, you imagine. Your paths once crossed when her days were long and yours short. There is still some apparatus or mechanism to be put in place to manage the adjustment.

The hiatuses, for example. If you were not to speak to her during the one day of rest you define per week, either yours or hers, then that day would last a day and a night and another day. Or a night and a day and another night, depending on where you find yourself.

It will always be that she has lived the day ahead of you. So far ahead, indeed, that the Rabbis were concerned that the day would be over for her and those around her before it had even begun in what they mapped out as the still centre of their world.

[...]

Sometimes she goes against her nature and rises unnaturally early to speak.

[...]

[...]

After dark you pass the night waiting for her to speak.

You pass the nights by a single blue light that spreads just far enough to illuminate your open book. A page a day or night. Neither more nor less.

Sometimes you grow uncomfortable with the ill-defined feeling that, whenever you resume your studies, the book is destined to repeat itself. A half remembering, where what should appear as new seems to cover old ground, perhaps according to a different school or interpretation. Or perhaps it is just not quite as you remember. You question whether you make any progress at all, and that you might well have forgotten to turn the page on the previous evening, prior to marking your progress by bookmark and, consequently, your eyes were poring over the same page, night after night.

You begin reading at dusk and read through deep into the night. As the light fades from the window you become aware of your reliance on this faint blue light, placed by the side of your book, vaguely configured to the lux of dusk reflected on the page. It lights the pages of the book from the left side that, by chance, is to the east of you. A faint blue light, casting a long amber shadow against the very grain of the page, so that you become aware of the page itself and the words as if cut into the paper.

From time to time in this half-light, and especially at that time you call dusk, you lose your sense of the words on the page. They appear to float apart from the surface of the paper. Your eyes cannot find any constant upon which to find focus. You while away too many hours with these words adrift from any reliable source or referent.

[...]

(You were always taught never to speak without acknowledging indebtedness for the words you would speak. You rarely speak in your name, but rather as the consequence of a line from one who passed what he had read onto another. Someone who always spoke or read in the name of another. And somewhere along this line, in this half-light, yourself.)

[...]

After dark you wait for her to wake. You imagine her rhythm an inverse reflection of your own, and that she spends her days poring over the pages, perhaps even according to the same school or interpretation you hold dear. Perhaps, even, over the same pages. The same page. That same old page you surmise you and perhaps she read over and again, half forgetting and half recalling in the half-light of her dawn or your dusk.

[...]

Perhaps the book is some sort of legend or map, inscribed in words or statistics rather than contours or outlines, and which can barely serve its original purpose. As you attempt to make sense of it, you cannot be certain of any intersection of one line or direction and another and its relation to where you sit now, night after night. A map in the form of a narrative that questions its own ability to mark your route. Until you, in turn, question your ability to read it.

[...]

[...]

Sometimes she goes against her nature and rises unnaturally early to speak. She does not utter a word without poring over her pages for a while, until she confirms to herself through her studies that no seismic upheaval has taken place while she slept.

*Adapted for performance by Barbara Campbell from a story by Andrew Renton.*