

TIMOTHY HYMAN

She tries to be gentle with him, caressing rather than hitting; then rolls across the great expanse of king-sized bed, past the gap between the two mattresses, clasping him tenderly from behind. 'You're ruining my night.' Having mounted the podium to receive yet another prestigious award, he has been delivering to a large audience an oration on Estonian Architecture c.1925, a subject about which he had not previously been aware he knew anything. As the spontaneous applause mounts to a crescendo, he starts up abruptly, just in time to catch the sound of his own grunting. 'It's terribly bad manners to snore like that after we've made love so happily.'

'Not at all. I feel like an old lion growling sleepily after a heavy meal.'

'It's not growling – it sounds like a pig, you said so yourself.'

'Just think of it as a kind of purring.'

Once she leaves his side he attempts the usual remedies: shifting the pillow so that only a small area of the head now touches; then gritting his teeth, forcing the nostrils to open. And he asks the dream-controllers to change the menu, away from those pompous, academic dreams, which seem to him always associated with snoring: something more personal, please – or what about some science fiction? The night glides on...

Plunging ever deeper inwards, the snorer experiences the rhythmic contraction of the air passages as a nasal soundtrack to the dream narrative, as his own modulation of the dream, a variegated music that in some way controls the corridors in and out of dream-space. A terrible disjunction opens up. He snuggles into that fertile, delicious, lyrical mode; his disgusting menagerie is let loose in the dark, its shameful repertory of gurgling, wheezing, snuffling, trumpeting, that enchantment by which night after night a bedroom becomes a farmyard, husband transformed into monster.

Half surfacing hours later, he hears a wheedling unfamiliar voice, a slurred monologue which morphs into barked command, and ending in tinkled quip-and-chortle. Her many selves. He turns away, back...

Flying high above the city, excitedly making out the familiar landmarks, he dives gracefully under Tower Bridge, with the Shard on the left, towards St. Paul's. Following the line of the river past the Festival Hall, he turns sharply northwards at Big Ben, up to the pagoda of the Post Office Tower, circling above the wondrous red hulk of St. Pancras, before swooping around his own *campanile*, the illuminated Gothick church tower of Myddelton Square. All this while he has been relishing, as so often on previous nights, the vertiginous sensations of spatiality accompanying each shift in direction or speed, mingling with those heart-warming jolts of recognition and love he experiences for this, his Territory. At one point the image coalesces into a painting, which he identifies as a Beckmann. But now, slowing, he begins a fatuous drifting – always a bad sign. Suddenly a sharp pain, a prod, followed by a slap. 'SHUT UP!' she says. OINK, OINK, he replies...