Calman revisited

Old jokes sometimes improve with age.

The PAST



methuen

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Calman Revisited

By the same author

My God (Souvenir Press)
This Pestered Isle (Times Newspapers Ltd)
But it's my turn to leave you . . . (Methuen)
How about a little quarrel before bed? (Methuen)
Help! and other ruminations (Methuen)

MEL CALMAN

Calman Revisited

METHUEN

This collection first published in 1983 by Methuen London Ltd 11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE

Bed-sit first published in book form by Jonathan Cape Ltd 1963
'Troubles with my Aunt' first appeared in the
Daily Telegraph Magazine 1974
Calman & Women first published by Jonathan Cape Ltd 1967
'The Resident' first published in The Penguin Mel Calman 1968
Couples first published in book form by The Workshop 1972
The new Penguin Calman containing the above first published by
Penguin Books Ltd 1977
Dr Calman's Dictionary of Psychoanalysis first published by W. H. Allen
Ltd 1979

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To my brother with love and to Professor Kreplach with ambivalence



Introduction

This collection is a mixture of various books I have produced over the last twenty years. They range from simple single cartoons (Bed-sit) to more complex attempts at deciphering male/female relationships (Couples). During these years I have slowly learned how to cope with the angst of having cartoon books published. I even published one book myself. This was Couples, which my gallery 'The Workshop' published when no proper publisher seemed very keen to do so. How they could overlook its evident merits is quite beyond me.

I learned a great deal from the experience, mainly about the enormous reluctance of some booksellers to part with money. I had the pleasure of seeing the book weighed in the palm of one of Britain's biggest wholesalers who said, 'Yes, it's good value for 50p – I'll take a thousand copies.' He did not look inside at the contents, which was my good luck, or he might not have liked it so much.

I will not bore the reader with long accounts of the genesis of each book. I think that the great S. J. Perelman once said that writing consisted of tearing up pieces of paper, and the same

applies to cartooning.

I would like to say a few words, however, about *Bed-sit* because it marks the beginning of my relationship with the little man I draw. He turned up one day when he heard that the *Sunday Telegraph* had a single column box to let. I had, of course, seen glimpses of him before, but his real personality had been hidden from me. However, as soon as he found this room to live in, he seemed to make himself at home in my own life.

I realised that his views and opinions coincided in many ways with mine – but he had a neater way of expressing them. When I wanted to be angry, he preferred to shrug his shoulders and mutter some wry aphorism. Over the years since we first met in 1962, he has changed. He always looked middle-aged but now he

really is middle-aged. His profile is more relaxed, less tense, and his clothes have become loose lines that could be half garment, half body.

When he gave up his box at the *Sunday Telegraph*, he tried living at *The Observer*. Unfortunately the editor, David Astor, expressed some bafflement at my man's so-called humour. He then visited *The Sunday Times* and found the atmosphere congenial: he even learned to be interested in politics and world affairs. He still doesn't understand them, but he hopes no-one apart from me notices that fact.

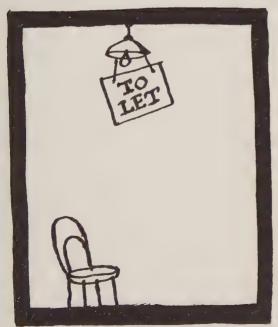
He now spends his weekdays at *The Times* and his Sundays at *The Sunday Times*. He even wanders abroad from time to time. I simply don't know how he manages to think of things to say. . . . I can only listen carefully and gratefully record them.

I don't know what I would do without him and I imagine he feels the same way about me.

Mel Calman London, December 1982

Bed-sit

'Bed-sit' first appeared in the Sunday Telegraph in 1962



It may be small but the proportions are pleasing . .





Which is it to be today? Toast and music, toast and light, music and toast in darkness, toast in silence?



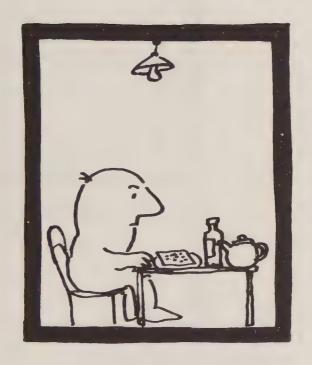
Have you ever tried to barbecue a lamb chop on a gas ring?



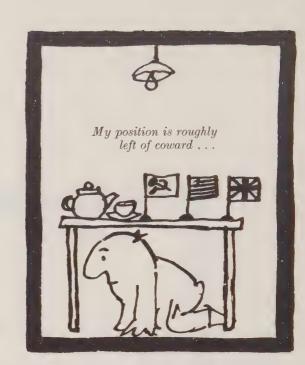
about these rooms is that you can almost overhear



Some of my best friends are acquaintances



There comes a time in every backelor's life when he must say: no more beans on toast – and mean it





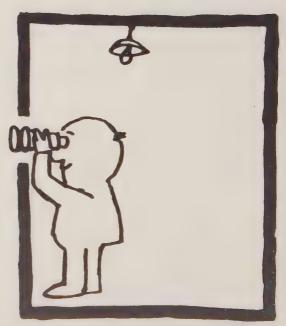




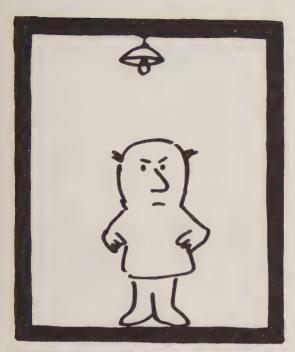
The landlady doesn't like the word 'restrictions'. She calls them 'aids to communal living'



I usually go
to the
launderette
in Kensington –
you meet a
better class
of dirty
washing there



That's funny – I didn't know they even knew each other



I could be very dominating – if only someone would volunteer to be submissive . . .





I like to give the suit an airing from time to time



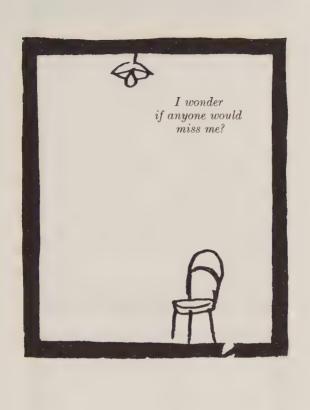
The girl next door never seems to run out of anything



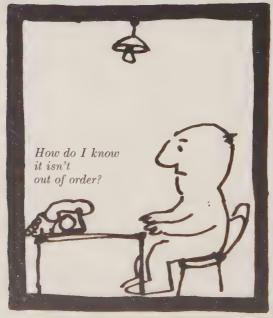


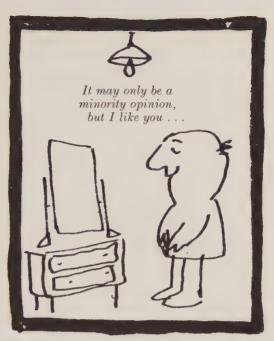
These classical writers really understood the human predicament . . .









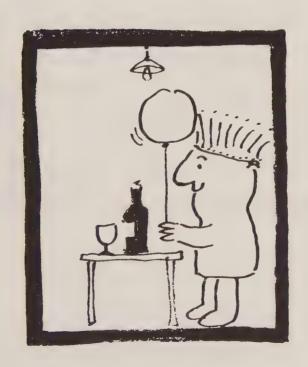




The score is highly gratifying: Christmas cards sent: 30 Christmas cards received: 32

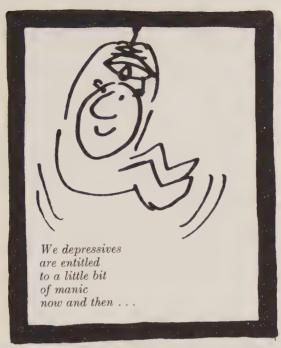


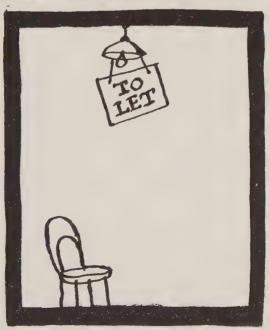
Paper hat, yes.
Balloon, yes.
Bottle, yes.
Now let revelry commence . . .





Gentleman with artistic tastes and cold feet wishes to meet lady with property in Bermuda . . .







Troubles with my Aunt

1. Paper Bags



My aged Aunt saves paper bags. I don't mean that she puts one or two away in a drawer for a rainy day. We all do that. I mean she keeps every single paper bag that comes into the house. She unwraps the bread and carefully puts the bag in a drawer. She places the bags from the groceries in the same drawer. She has a system: the brown bags in one drawer and the white bags in another drawer.

She usually puts the small bags inside the largest bags, to save space. Bags lie on top of bags. Bags nestle inside bags. Bags beget bags. Whole communes of bags live inside those kitchen drawers.

I ask my Aunt, when I feel slightly frayed by all this bag cupidity, why she keeps all these bags. 'I need them,' she says, and the subject is closed. To be fair to her, she does use some of the bags. Let me explain.

Every night my Aunt prepares her bedtime tray. This tray is a ritual, an appeasement to the gods of sleep. The pink tray is placed beside the kitchen sink. My Aunt carefully takes three cups and half-fills them with cold water. Always three cups, always the same three cups. And always half-full. Never three-quarters or five-eighths. Exactly half. They are half-full because my Aunt has worked out over the years that a half-cup is exactly the right amount she needs to ease her heartburn. She gets attacks of heartburn in the middle of the night and she drinks fruit salts for this. A full cup of fruit salts is too much of a good thing. And she needs this cure three times a night. Hence, the three cups.

Ah, you may ask, why not a jug and three empty cups? Or even, a jug and one cup, which then gets half-filled three times? Because, as my Aunt patiently explained to me once, this method is foolproof and ready for use. It's an instant heartburn kit. No messing about in the half-light, trying to half-fill cups.

I once bought a jug and tried to persuade her to change her system, and she gave me a long, level stare that said: Never meddle with the

laws of nature . . .

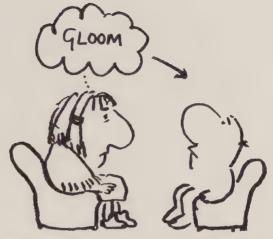
What about the paper bags, you cry. How do the paper bags cure the heartburn? Has the man lost all sense of narrative shape and decency? No. The paper bags are carefully torn open, flattened and used to cover the cups (or half-cups) of water. Each half-cup has its own little nightcap of paper, held down by a rubber band. And of course, they are needed to keep the dust out. My Aunt doesn't want dust getting into her water. Who would?

The problem is that even with using three bags a night, my Aunt is stockpiling bags rather rapidly. The drawers are full. I'm thinking of buying her a suitcase to keep the rest of her collection. But my Aunt doesn't approve of suitcases. Dust gets into them, she says. She admits that dust even gets into drawers. Which is why she gets the bags out every other day and dusts them. Gives them a careful dust, and then returns them to their correct drawer.

I believe my Aunt keeps these bags the way other old people have pets. Something to care for and look after. Not much company, perhaps. But at least house-trained. And, thankfully, very quiet.



2. Depressions



My Aunt and I suffered a great deal from depression, mostly hers. When she felt depressed she would come into my room – where I was usually looking at a blank sheet of paper, hoping a joke would appear on it – and sigh.

'What's the matter, Auntie?'

'I feel terrible.'

'Take a tranquillizer.'

'Do you think I should? Who knows what's in them?'

'Neither of us knows. Just take one and you'll feel better.'

'It may make me feel worse.'

'You always take them, and you always feel better.'

'I don't think they're the same ones as the last ones the doctor gave me.'

'Of course they are . . .'

'How do you know?'

'They look the same. Green and black. With your name on the bottle.'

'They don't taste the same. Perhaps the chemist has given me the wrong pills.'

'Take one, please . . .'

Sigh. 'You think I should?'

'Yes, I do.'

'Doctors. What do they know?'

As my Aunt got older she suffered more and more from hypochondria (which must be hereditary, because I get it too – especially in the middle of the night) and needed more and more to consult doctors, in spite of her basic lack of faith in them.

Days would start and end with my Aunt asking me to call a doctor because she felt 'terrible'. If the doctor came, she would repeat all her ailments and troubles. He would listen patiently, leave a prescription, and I would go to the chemist with it.

Whatever was prescribed, my Aunt would distrust it. Look at it, sniff it, and worry whether it would make her worse. She would snort. 'What do doctors know? My mother, bless her, knew more in her little finger than these young kids know in their whole heads . . .'

'Why get me to call the doctor then?'

'What do you want me to do? Suffer in silence?'

Whatever else my Aunt did, she certainly never suffered in silence. She suffered her anxieties and depressions out loud. She crossed each day gingerly, as if it were a tightrope which might snap under her at any moment, and plunge her to her death.

The mornings began with sighs and remarks about how badly she

slept the night before.

'I went to bed late again last night,' she would say.

'Really, why?'

'I started thinking about your mother and how she never looked after herself properly. If she had listened to me, she would still be alive. Always rushing about, doing things, enjoying herself. She should have rested her heart more.'

'Well, she did live to be seventy-eight. That's not too bad.'

'She could have lived another twenty years, if she had listened to me.'

'Her doctor said . . .'

'What do doctors know? Nothing.'

Then came breakfast of cups of tea and cream crackers. (Always Jacobs'. I once tried to palm her off with another brand and she sulked all day.) Then more sighs and heartburn. Treatment for heartburn with fruit salts, and more cups of tea.

More heartburn would follow the cups of tea. More anxiety would follow the heartburn.

'Do you think I've got an ulcer?' she would ask me, clutching her stomach.

'Of course not. But I shouldn't drink so much tea. It can't be good for your stomach.'

'Perhaps I should see a Specialist?'

'What kind of Specialist?'

'Someone who specializes in everything.'

'Just take a tranquillizer.'

'Do you think I should?'

'Yes, for God's sake, yes.'

'It might make me feel worse . . .'

How I wished there was a pill she could have taken to make her calm enough to take her tranquillizers \dots



Once a week my Aunt would announce, 'I am going to have My Bath today.'

Now most people find it fairly simple to have a bath. You probably remember how it goes. You enter the bathroom, you put the plug in, turn on the hot water, get into the bath, wash, sing, get out, dry yourself and exit. My Aunt's approach was more Epic, like one of those long Eisenstein movies where people seem to be forever climbing up the same flight of stairs.

My Aunt would first slowly collect her clean linen, so as to have it all ready for changing into after Her Bath. This involved Sorting Out her linen, which took up most of the morning. Sometimes she would find an old letter buried amongst her linen, become interested in the memories it aroused and have to postpone The Bath until the next day. But if all went well, she would have a bite of lunch and start Phase Two around two o'clock.

Phase Two was Washing Out the Bath. She had a great fetish about cleanliness, which I imagine was sexual in origin, since she was a maiden Aunt. I am sure Freud would have enjoyed analysing her motives – all I know is that it was very heavy on the Vim. She would wash the bath very thoroughly, rinse it with running cold water, rewash it and then carefully feel the whole surface with her fingers. If there was the slightest blemish, she would clean the whole bath out again. This took about an hour. Then she would fill the bath.

By this time she was feeling a bit hungry and exhausted. So she would put on the kettle for a cup of tea. Several cups of tea and several cream crackers (her favourite food) later, she would go back to the bathroom. And find the water stone cold.

So she would have to empty the bath and re-fill it. While it was filling, she would go to collect her Clean Linen. She carried all her underclothes carefully wrapped up in an old piece of torn sheet, tied and sealed with several safety-pins. I don't know why they had to be wrapped up like this since the distance between her bedroom and the bathroom was all of five yards. I think it was in case dust (one of my Aunt's great enemies) got at the clean linen.

At last she was actually ready for Phase Three – the Bath itself. Before she entered the water, she would call out to me that she was going in (in case I had not noticed she was Having a Bath) and that she was leaving the door unlocked in case she felt faint and needed

sudden rescuing from drowning.

I would then settle down to work, and she would call out again. 'Can you shut the window? I can't lift it and I can't have a draught blowing down on me in the bath.' She always liked the window open whilst running the bath, to allow the gas fumes from the Ascot to escape, and she would always then need the window shut before she could enjoy the bath.

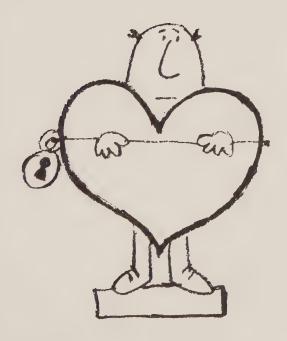
About an hour later she would slowly emerge from the steamy bathroom, carefully swathed in clean underwear and towels. (For some other deep Freudian reason unknown to me, my Aunt never owned, and could never be persuaded to buy, any kind of dressing-gown. I think she thought they were only worn by Loose Women.)

'Be a good boy,' she would say, 'and make me a nice cup of tea. I feel faint. The bath was far too hot.' Or sometimes it was, 'I feel faint

and cold. I think I caught a chill in there.'

I would make us a pot of tea and she would drink it greedily, and sigh, as if just rescued from a sinking ship. She looked rather like a survivor, all wrapped in towels and exuding dampness. 'Thank God that's done,' she said. 'It's a terrible business, having a bath.'

Calman and Women







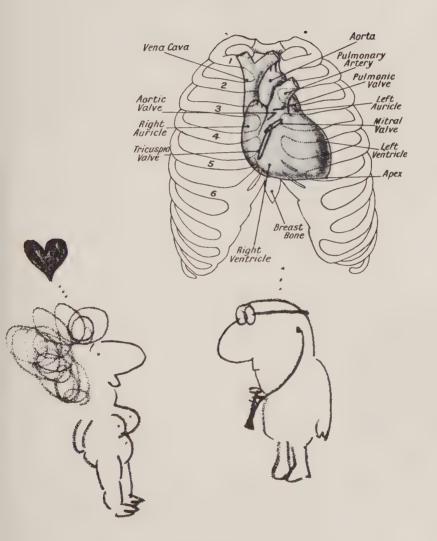


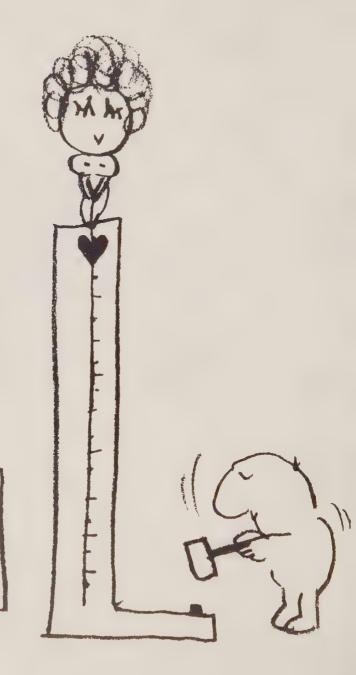












TRY YOUR LUCK NOW!



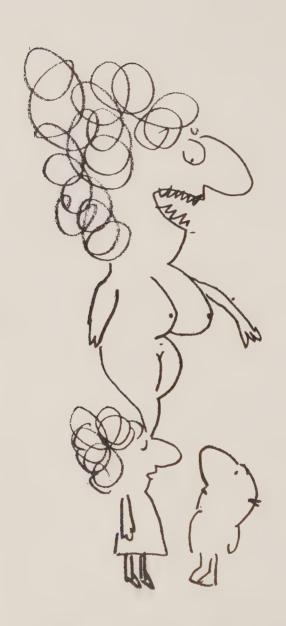




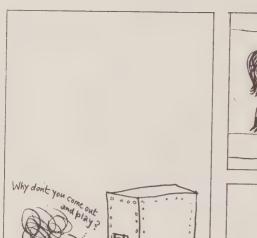












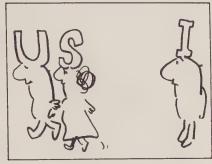


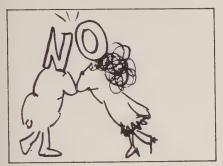


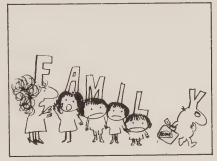


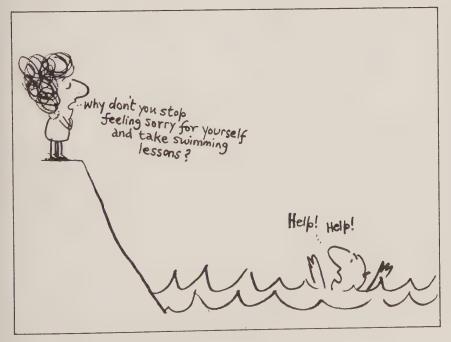












and may the best man win...









Wenever quarrelwe aren't close enough
for that



Don't bother me nowlive got a lot on my mind...





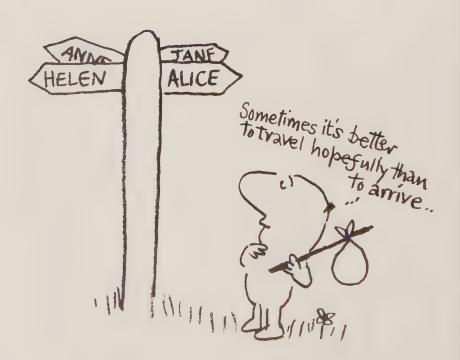


One man's meat Is another woman's Sunday gone

But it's my turn to leave you









Well-If I allow myself to love you I will be vulnerable and you might hurt me - anyway. I can't relate to you whilst I am dependent on you financially. I need to be free and I need to love myself before I can love you... and my analyst says that I am too anxious to love anyone. I do love you, or rather, | want to love you but .. Perhaps I could go and live away from you for awhile, then I might be free to come closer to you, if you see what I mean... oh dear! It's really not fair of you to keep asking me these difficult questions...

Do you love me?



The Resident

WELL-Imhere ...

I wonder what he wants me to do...

no sign of any instructions.

(3)

no message scrawled in the dust ...

It's really annoying
I come here, I want to do

My Dest and

There's silence...

U

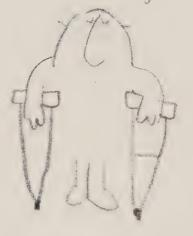
Shall Idance?

Shail shail singgle?

-Shall I discover the secret of life?



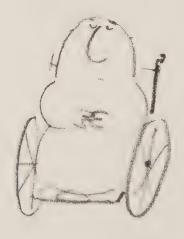
to cope bravely with life ...



Condemned to my wheelchair. resigned to my affliction.



Converting the dross of pain into the gold of sevenity...





No thankyou ...

it's a good part but I hate long runs...



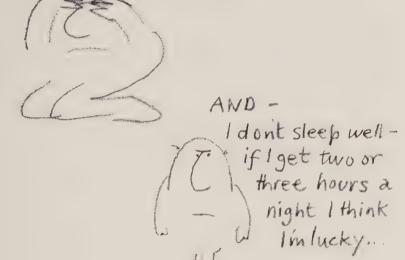


FIRST!

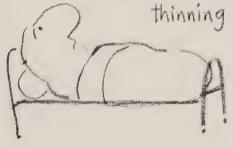
I've got this backache which grips me suddenly as I walk along...



THEN - I get these terrible migraine headaches once a month...



I just lie there worrying about the money lowe and my
thinning hair...





AND THAT'S NOT ALL ..

You see, basically I feel I'm not really enjoying life..

.. AND I worry about that.



The joke isIdidn't ask to be
here.. I was
created.

And it's not

And it's not funny ...

(3 Ch)

... HOW WOULD

YOU LIKE TO

BE THE FIGMENT OF SOMEONE ELSE'S IMAGINATION?





ljust skipped a page and he didn't notice!



: AT LEAST -

he intended me to skip a

page - part of some

terrible plot he's brewing...

You CANT Trust anyone these days!



Ever since writers gave up happy endings I feel very uneasy...

It's become fashionable to be unhappy. I'm old-fashioned.

Isay - and I mean it ...

BRING BACK
THE HAPPY
ENDINGS!

DOWN WITH

DOSTOE USKY!

LONG LIVE

IVOR NOVELLO!

Let us remember-

BADART can be GOOD FUN...

especially forms

boor souls who

have to sweat

it out...

day afterday...

LIFT THAT ANSST, TOTE THAT PSYCHE!

Body & Soul racked with pain ...

SUDDENLY-I feel sad again.

I knew it was too good to last ..

If he sees me Wenjoying myself he gets jealous...

WANTS ALL THE GLORY FOR HIMSELF

BANG!

I was only kidding. SANGI BANG

Bown

Histrouble is he got no sense of humour

I know what I'll do-

I'LL RESIGN!

That will teach him to mess me about ..

Adignified letter-

Dear Sir, Ifel the time has come for us to part company. Those Jorns Jone felt intense dissatisfaction with the living arrangements. Either it's too cold or too hot. It rains frequently. The food is in adequate - the company non-existent. The fantasies / have are of poor quality. One is continually promised improvements in all directions. Change is always in the air but never on the ground. Even the misery lacks grandeny. There is a feeling of trivality infrising all departments. Apathy and ennu are my handmuidens. I would have thought you would have. been ashamed of the poverty of the inventions I inhabit. I feel ashamid

to be seen in them. Fortunally, fere pigni see we in my reduced incurstance. for the general pullic has the good taste to assoid the ridiculous and the unsignificant. I therefore wish to be excused furthe participation in this chare de. Please consider me às no longer available. I resign. I quit. I work more. I would speak your words. I want perform your actions. Thanking you for your interest, TYTIMOGE.

yours respectfully

IMINK Just wrote myself etc

- SILENCE .

Thoja I didn't host his feelings.

The great thing in this racket is to survive The next page may be better. andifitisnt. don't worry.. Keep smiling. count Your blessings .. enjoy the little things .. if the text is lousy admire the binding ...



As my mother used to say - if life hands you a lemon, make lemonate.

The trouble is -

| emonade | gives me | heart-burn... I see words aheadperhajis it's a message?

GOOD NEWS
AT LAST!

THE FEND

THE SEND

THE SE

The End? - is that a promiseor a threat? But I was just beginning to like it here.



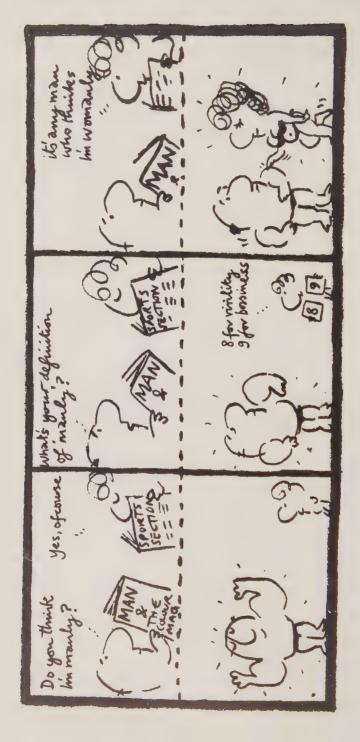
Couples

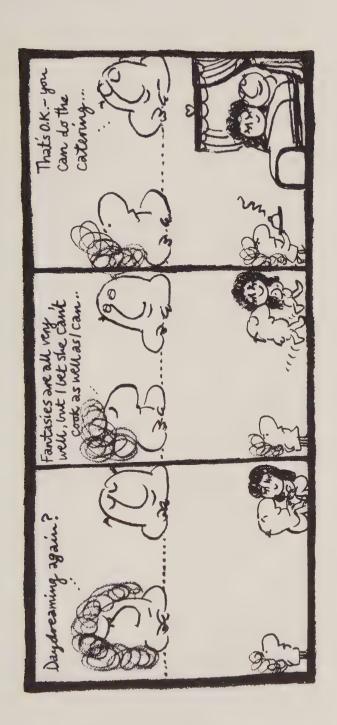


The idea of a double-decker strip cartoon is not entirely new: in the early 1900s George Herriman created a double strip about a cat and a mouse living underneath a family called 'The Dingbat Family'. Eventually the family were evicted and the strip became 'Krazy Kat'.

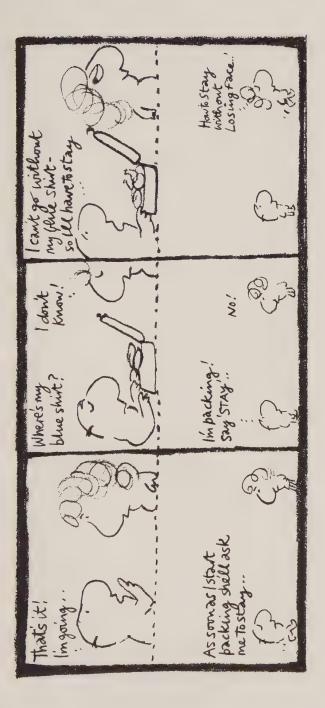
I've always been interested in the gap between what people say and what they think, and I felt that a two-level strip might be a good place to explore this gap. At first I put the thoughts above the characters (as in the usual think-bubble convention), but as I wanted people to read the thoughts after they'd read the spoken words, I finally placed the thoughts on the bottom layer. My thoughts always seem to me to be below my conscious mind.

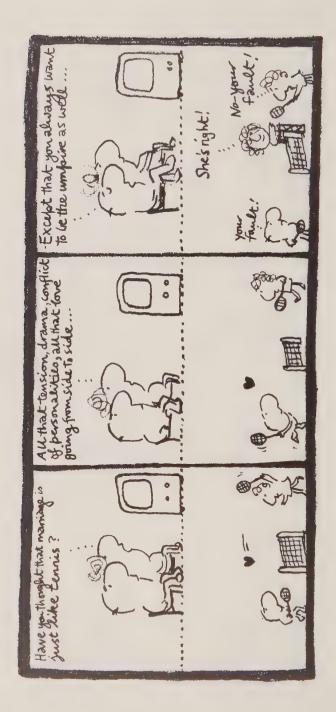
Originally I wanted to draw the bottom level as a rather surreal landscape, which only connected with the top level at times, and at other times followed its own logic. But various readers' reactions (the strip ran for a year in the *Sunday Times*) made me realize this would be too complicated and confusing. So the strip settled into something more conventional than I had hoped for – governed by the tyranny of a punch line in the last frame. I suppose the ideal strip would run on without having to end in a gag – but that would be something else. I think it's called 'life'.

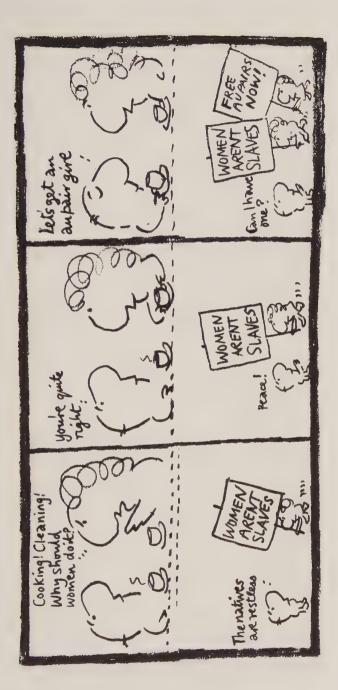


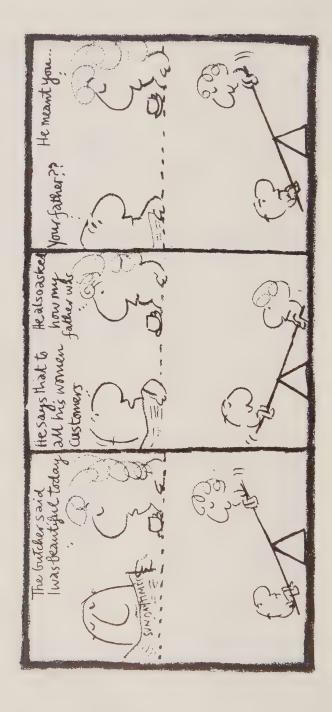


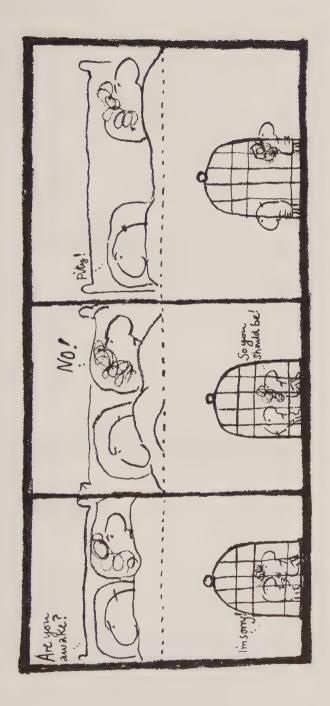


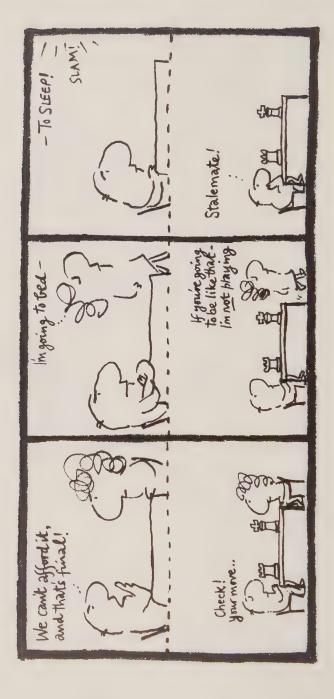




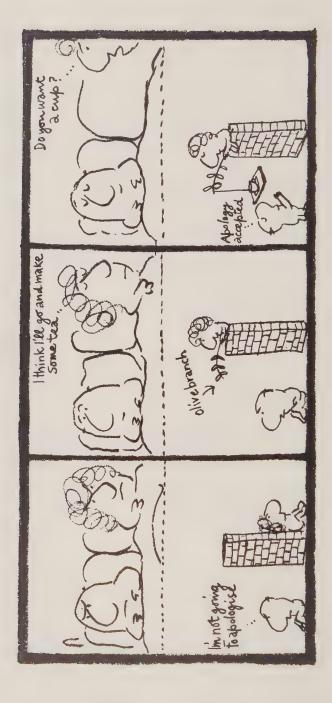


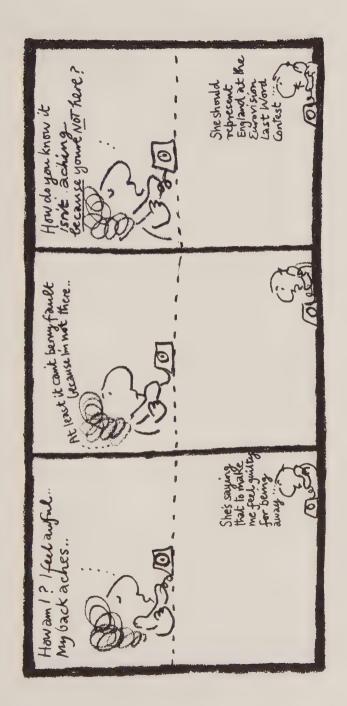


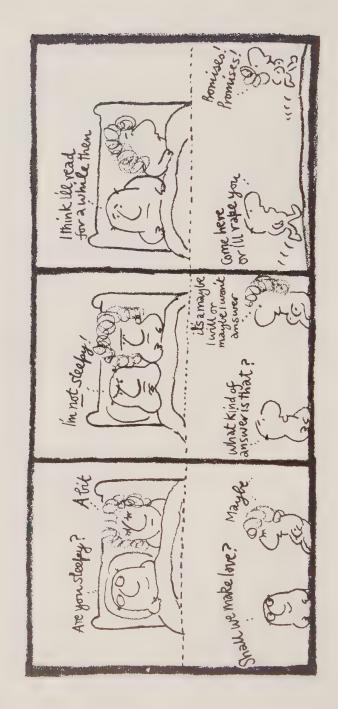












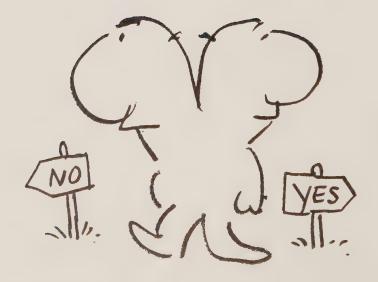
Dr Calman's Dictionary of Psychoanalysis



Aggression



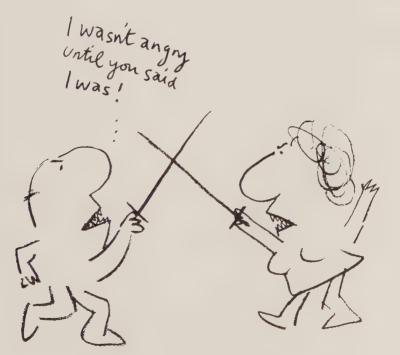
Ambivalence



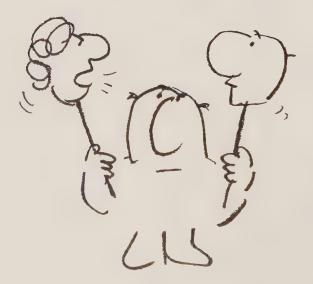
Amnesia

What blonde?





Animus & Anima



Anxiety

Which is it to be today?

Phobic, Castration,

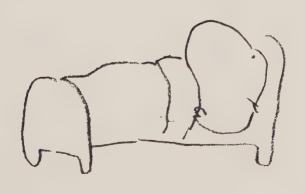
separation,

depressive,

paranoid anxiety

or plain

Panic?







Castration Anxiety



Claustrophobia

This is not the place to discover you're daustrophobic.



Coitus



Communication

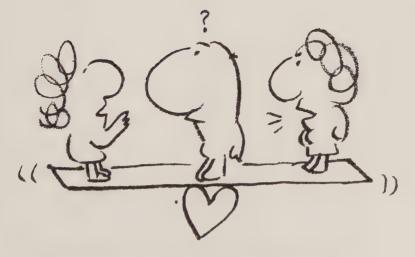
One of my problems is that I have trouble in communicating. It seems I find myself using words às à défence. They are a shield behind which I hide I don't believe in the reality of feelings. So I try to verbalise my inner conflicts and this results in a schizoid dichotomy between my Juts and my head. Do you follow me?



Compulsive



Conflict

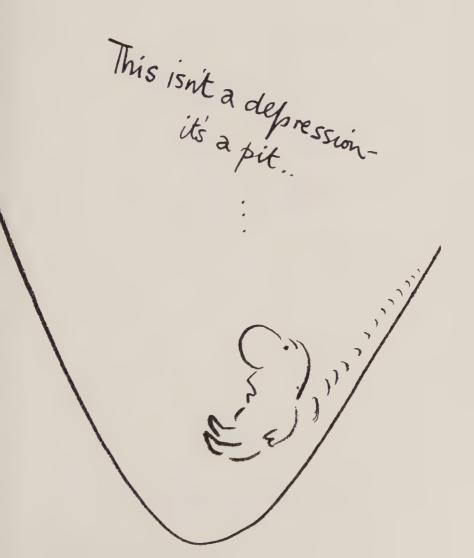


This is either a bad case of conflict or a man with two wives: Editor.

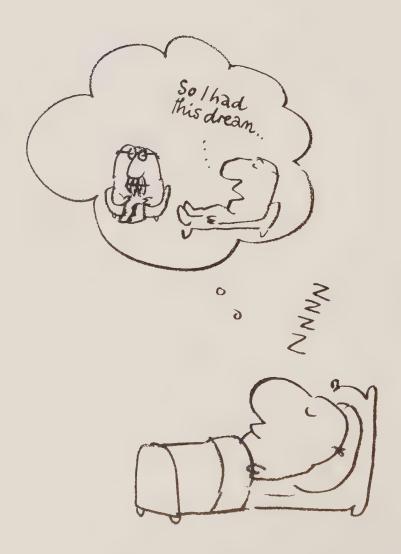
Death Wish



Depression



Dreams





Exhibitionism

Unfortunately, I'm only an ear, nose and throat chapto but your clother on ...



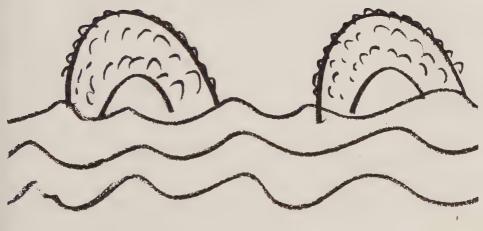


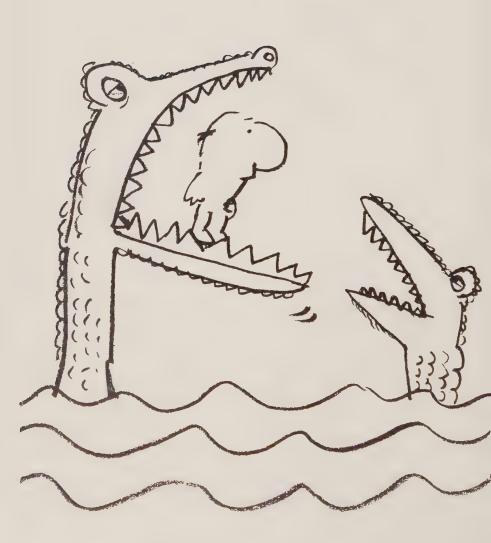
Fantasy



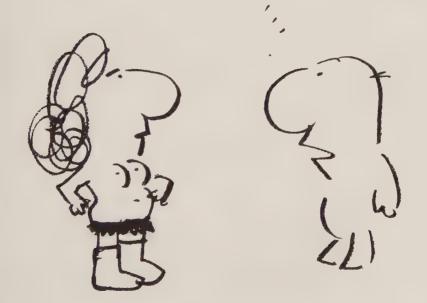
Father

Fear

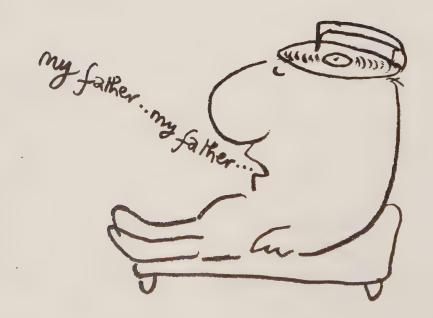




For goodness sakeit has to be boots. Wellies won't do.



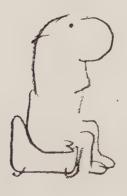
Fixation



Forgetting

I don't care if it was unconscious-you shouldn't have forgotten my birthday.





Free Association

Why is it called when its so expensive?

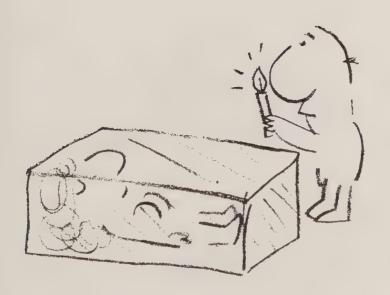
Freedom

Freedom? what's that?

Freudian Slip



Frigidity (see Headaches)



Gloom (see Melancholia)





Guilt

And now I feel guilty that I feel

Happiness

What are the symptoms of happiness, Dorto

Hate

Never mind the ambivalence what about the HATE?

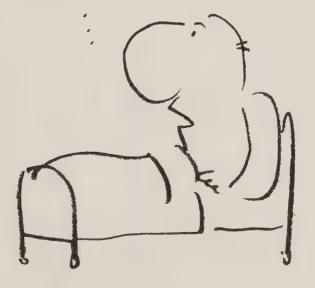


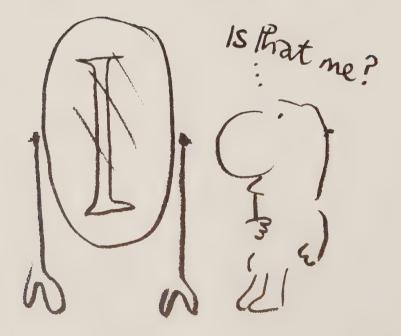


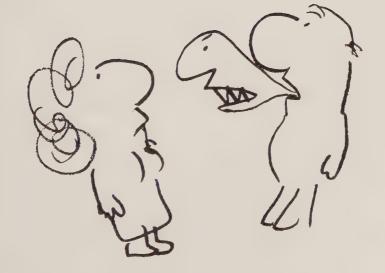


Hypochondria

Even hypochondniacs
get ill.







Identity

Pally me' or just someone

Who goes to an analyst

and has a wife and children

And if I'm not me - A Who am 1? And if I'm not me - who will And if im in hand if can the other than keep away mand y can keep away

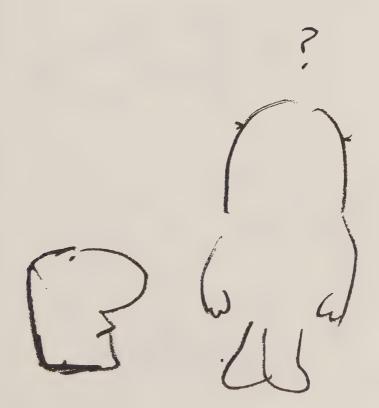
from the cracks in the

pavements, let be

who ever the is 900.

appointment of next

Identity Crisis



She's not just old enough to be his mother orgh she is



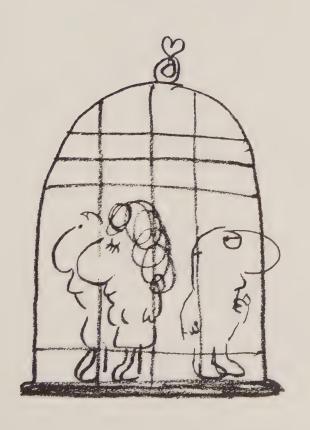
Infantile Regression

Don't worny-I've had worse cases..

I shouldn't say this_ but you're driving me



Jealousy



between your 18
and your 18
naughty bits.



Love

When you say Love, do you mean EROS or a need for instinctual satisfaction or object Love or ordipal love a genital love or simple old-fashioned

Marriage (see Help!)

Doctor
In Suffering from
bouts of manage.



Masochism

Mad to give up masochismwas enjoying it too much:



Masturbation

because I don't g fancy myself all that much...

AM MORE
MATURE THAN YOU!

Melancholia (see Depression)



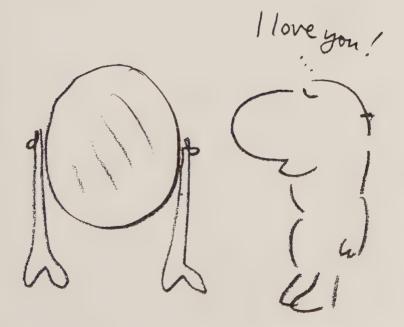
it's something I'm always out of...



Mother (see Oedipus Complex)



Narcissism



I'm not being negative.

Neurotic



I'm tired of being a sex object to women.

Obsession

The nature of obsession is very interesting.

Control your impulses (see sex) and I do

as the germs tend to spread

contract your couch and the

contract your social

Now what was

I saying ?

Oedipus Complex (see Mother)

If it wasn't for my mother.
I wouldn't be where
I am today.





Orgasm



Paranoia



Patient

I hope I'm not boring you.

Penis Envy

Well-can't I borrow it just for tonight?





Persona



dreamed of a tall, dark man shalle g

Phobia



Pleasure

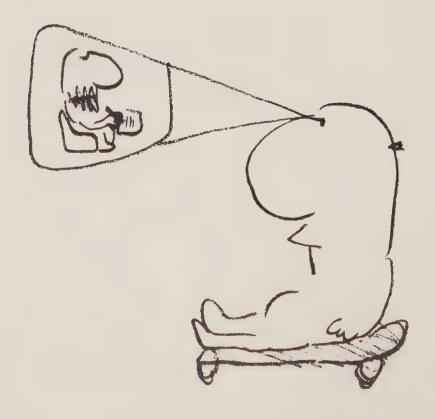


Pleasure Principle

principle Sure You don't have to enjoy it.



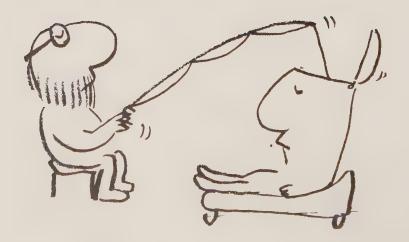
Projection



Psyche



Psychoanalysis



Psychosis



Psychosomatic

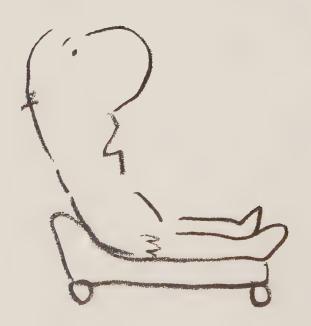


Rapport

If we have any more rapport well have to get married, nont we?



Is this realand if so - why does it



Reality

If it huntsit's real.



Religion



Repression

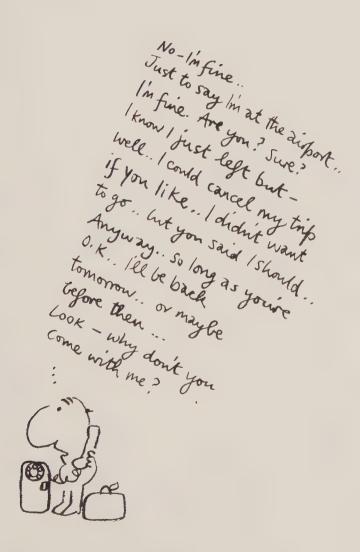


Sadness (see Gloom, Depression)

This is nt real depression, since no conflict is present.



Separation Anxiety

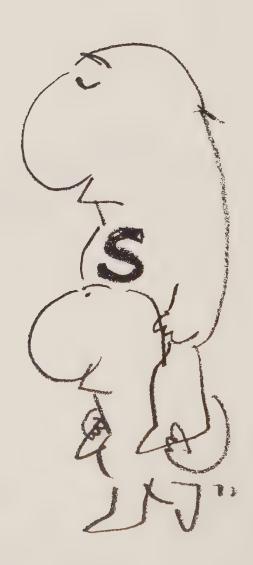




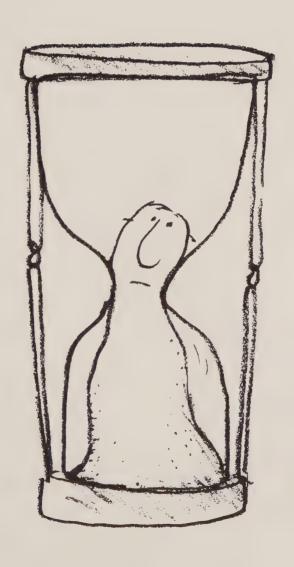
Sexual Perversion

dressing up as a chicken- but I'm damned if I'm going to

Superego



Time



Transference

You now even nother, of

Transvestite

I don't mind you wearing my dress-but I do mind you getting more wolf whistles in it.



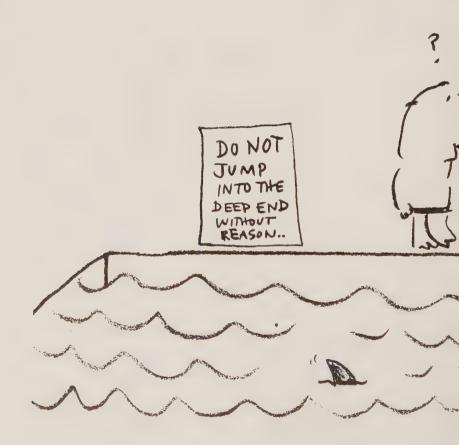
I come from a long time of traumas.

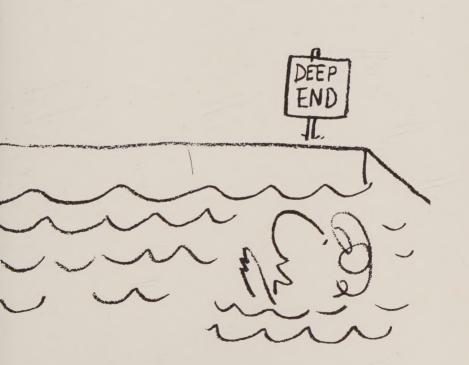
Truth

I'm coming out whether I like it or not



Unconscious, The









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