

Vicente Palomera
The Paternal Function and
Little Hans' Phobia

In his Seminar on *La relation d'objet* ("Object Relations") in 1957, Jacques Lacan develops the thesis that the phobic symptom is the result of a fault or flaw in the paternal function.¹ This means there was a difficulty in the construction of the paternal metaphor.

In principle, all the neuroses are defined as determined montages which respond to a non-resolution of the Oedipal situation, the latter not, so to speak, "automatically" leading to the symbolic operation of castration. This operation allows the subject to situate himself as a sexed being without too much difficulty.

Phobia is the simplest illustration of the type of situation where symbolic castration is not carried out correctly due to a flaw in the consistency of the paternal figure or the relation he maintains with the law which he must represent, sustain and transmit.

The link between phobia and the paternal function is already present in Freud. For both Freud and Lacan, the encounter with the boy known in the analytic literature as Little Hans is an opportunity to trace the main themes concerning the question of the father. Indeed, it is from "clinical observation" of this case that Freud will give the castration complex-which he certainly did not ignore the fundamental place which it took on in analytic theory.²

The father's role becomes more and more that of the agent of castration, which will lead Freud to a very important modification of his theory of anxiety. If anxiety was taken as a consequence of repression at first, an inversion of the question takes place from 1925-26 in "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety." Anxiety is no longer the result of repression, but rather the *cause*. It is thus tied to an action localized "outside," anxiety being the affect which accompanies the threat of castration.³

This is an important point in theorizing phobia, since the latter is explicitly designated as a "fixation of anxiety" by which "an

external danger is replaced, substituted by another, external danger," for example. As we will see, the horse plays this role for Little Hans.

The importance Lacan attributed to the paternal function led him to refine the concept of 'father' and to apply the three registers (Imaginary; Real; Symbolic) which he had singled out as necessary for psychic functioning. Briefly then, there are three different fathers in Lacan's work; the imaginary, the real and the symbolic father. From 1957 on, Lacan stressed the importance of the "question of the father," specified as being central in the analytic experience as a questioning which, he says, is "externally unresolved".

At this time, Lacan was working on the consequences of his thesis, well known today, that the unconscious is structured like a language. He thus tackled the question of the father in the context of those operations which, he argued, were specific to the unconscious: metaphor and metonymy. This thesis led him to situate the paternal function as a metaphor which he formalized as follows:

	<u>Name of the Father</u>	•	<u>DM</u>	=	Name of the Father
Desire of the mother	DM		X		

This formula, known as the "paternal metaphor" is what *guarantees* the metaphoric substitution of one signifier for another signifier. The signifier of the mother's desire, enigmatic for the child, is substituted for by the signifier of the *Name-of-the-Father*, which responds, so to speak, to this enigma with the mediation of phallic signification.

Theorized in this way, the father is not equivalent to the actual person "papa". And neither is he an ideal figure, an ideal object. The symbolic father, the one who is the agent of castration, is a signifying function. Thus, at this period of his teaching, Lacan states the axiom that is by no means obvious to common sense: the father is a signifier. He calls this signifier the Name-of-the-Father.

The presence or the absence of this Name-of-the-Father is of such great importance in the establishment of the structure of the subject that it will serve as a criterion to distinguish clinically between the two great psychopathological figures: the neurotic and the psychotic. The key to the idea of the father, to the extent that he *intervenes* in the Oedipus complex in a structuring way, is situated at the level of metaphor. The "paternal deficiencies" that we refer to so often to

explain the different misfortunes of psychic suffering must be basically situated at this level.

The case of the "illness" of Little Hans will be treated as an illustration of the attempt to resolve the metaphor which, for reasons which we will examine, cannot be completed as such. For this child, symbolic transposition has not been secured. It only functions at all, then, by way of the symptom, the phobic symptom. Little Hans is afraid of being bitten by a horse. Here, the symptom functions as a *construction* that will allow the paternal metaphor to be set into place. As a construction, it takes up the slack of what has failed in the symbolic environment of the child. Thus, it is not to be considered in this context as a symptom, as a bearer of *jouissance*. Rather, it is to be classed as a transitory "symptom". The child produces this fear, the fear of horses, of an animal which he finds in the surroundings outside his home and which will *delimit* the spaces where he will be able to go or not go by its presence or absence.

The presence of Hans' father, his "papa," the third person who enters the Oedipal situation, is not sufficient to support the function which falls to him; that of assuring the metaphorical substitution, that would allow the child a response to the anxiety-provoking question concerning the mother's desire, when the circumstances are such that the child risks responding to the mother's enigmatic desire with his own body. If the response is not transmitted from the side of the father in such a way that it *makes sense* for the mother, so that she transmits to the child what is emitted from the place of the father, the child risks not being able to dislodge himself from the place he had come to occupy as phallus for the mother.

Let us pursue the case of Little Hans in more detail so as to illustrate the operation by which the "horse" will allow the establishment of the paternal metaphor. The horse animal is raised at a certain moment to the dignity of a signifier which will come to function in the place of the Name-of-the-Father. Thus, the operation of metaphor will follow this formulation for Little Hans:

The horse residing in the place of the Name-of-the-Father:

<u>Horse</u>	DM (desire of the mother)
DM	
	<u>S₂</u>
	<u>S₁</u>
	§

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In this, metaphor is not a comparison or an analogy between two theories of identification.

The presentation of Little Hans by both Freud and Lacan is extremely instructive both clinically and theoretically. We will single out what is necessary, in our opinion, to illustrate this "animal phobia" as a replacement which allows paternal metaphorisation. Let us start with a few general remarks on the case. The child known in the analytic literature as "Little Hans" was in fact called Herbert Graf and was the son of the musicologist Max Graf. It would seem that Freud chose the name "Hans" because this name is ironic in German. The use of irony is indeed a prominent trait marking this child who mocks the absurd replies given to the fundamental questions he asks; in particular those replies to questions concerning the birth of children, the sexual difference, or his curiosity about the sexual act itself. As an adult, the child Herbert Graf will become a famous Opera director. He will die in 1973.

Even if the case of Hans has remained the main case of child analysis in the analytic literature, it does not take place in the Freudian setting of clinical practice governed by free association and the regular return of the encounter with the analyst. In fact, Freud will only see the child once in a meeting where Hans is accompanied by his father. However, as we will see, this meeting operates a fundamental change, almost immediately entailing the resolution of the phobic symptom, or at least its alleviation.

Before this meeting there had been another one, that of Freud and Max Graf. Although this meeting was based on friendship, it took place on the basis of Max Graf's interest in Freud's ideas. Indeed, Hans' father thought of himself, in a sense, as a disciple of Freud's. He reports the actions and speech of Hans to him, portraying his child, who is no doubt very bright, so that Freud could test the validity of his theories of infantile sexuality. Note that Freud had already published his "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality."⁴ However, this meeting (which took place at the beginning of 1907), initially motivated by scientific interests, would be transformed into a therapeutic consultation since Little Hans "had caught" an illness: he himself called it his "nonsense," the fear of being bitten by a horse.

What was Hans like before catching this "nonsense"? He wasn't even three when Freud received the first information--via the father--about his "sexual" development. Everything seemed normal. Hans showed a great interest in what he called his *Wiwimacher*,

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translated into English as "widdler" or "wee wee". This interest was first of all theoretical for Freud. For him Hans is a researcher, an "investigator" in the sense that Freud tied all searches for knowledge to a sexual investigation, a curiosity about sexuality. Hans uses his *widdler* as an organizing and classifying element for the world and the objects around him. Who's got one?

Who hasn't got one? Who's got a big one? Who's got a little one? Animals are of particular interest to Hans as a place to observe this presence or absence, or this comparison of size. The child classifies: this is the universal premise of the phallus, that Freud postulated from his analytical experience. His *widdler* is also the support of an imaginary function of the phallus; it is at the center of a game of *hide-and-peek*. But, finally and most crucially, it becomes the place of a very real *jouissance*. The great interest he shows in his penis can no longer be reduced to a theoretical interest and to the production of a system of classification. It emerges as the site of sensations of sexual pleasure. In other words, Hans has discovered the pleasures of masturbation. But these pleasures change the relation (no doubt a privileged one) that he had maintained up until then with his mother. This masturbatory *jouissance* triggers a sort of conflict between him and his mother.

The mother finds Hans with "his hand on his penis" and threatens him, saying, "If you do that, I shall send for Dr. A to cut off your widdler." Hans seems to receive this terrifying threat without too much difficulty, however, and when the mother asks, "And then what'll you widdle with?" he replies calmly: "With my bottom". Hans still lives in the best of worlds, free from any guilt that would indicate that the masturbatory pleasure had been connected to a forbidden *jouissance*. Moreover, Hans' theoretical questioning around the issue of the *widdler* becomes the object of a great interest on the part of his father, who reports everything to Professor Freud.

The maternal threat, formulated as a threat of castration, must not be confused with the castration threat emitted from the place of the father. The threat formulated by the mother is not operational in the sense that we discussed at the start of this paper. However, it is by no means redundant; it produces an effect. It constitutes the *sign* of something for Hans, indicating that his masturbatory pleasures are not approved of by his mother. Yet this disapproval did not satisfy him about her wishes. Hence, the question emerges for the child: but what does she want? What does she want from me? What does she want to do with me?

Another event will occur which is linked to this problematic in establishing his relation with his mother: The birth of Anna, his Little sister, when Hans is three and a half. This results in six months of intense jealousy and rejection of Anna. When this period was over, Hans devoted himself to an unconditional protection of his sister which seems to have marked his whole life. One sees that Hans has "caught" the threat of maternal castration as well as the jealousy, and yet he has still not caught his "nonsense".

Hans is still bound to the "realist" conviction regarding the universality of the phallus. His sister Anna has a penis, even though it's a Little one, he says, but it will grow. As for his mother, he has no doubt that she has one which is probably as big as that of a horse. We must add that his mother doesn't deny this supposition of being the bearer of a penis.

Hans thus appears to be a perfectly normal child, showing all the behavior that his position in the mother-child-phallus compound would allow as possibilities: homosexuality, voyeurism, exhibitionism. That is, his behavior shows all the positions in which he can ensure *being* the phallus for the mother. Freud affirms that Hans is indeed a little Oedipus, really adoring his mother, and furthermore that the genital zone gradually replaces the other erogenisations, urethral or anal, as the privileged erogenous zone. This primacy of genitality would partly explain why Hans, faced with the difficulties of passing through the Oedipus, turned towards a neurosis and not towards a perversion.

However, Freud received a letter from Hans' father where the latter tells him that his son has caught an illness: The "fear of being bitten in the street by a horse". The immediately preceding events which Freud singled out as the explanatory sequence allow us to trace the causal chain leading up to the phobia.

Let us present a *brief chronology* now.

At four years and 5 months, Hans gets up, cries, and when his mother asks him why he is crying, he replies "While I was asleep, I thought you were gone and I had no Mummy to coax with."

A few days later, on the 7th of January, 1908, Hans was out walking with the nurse. He was overcome with anxiety. He wanted to return quickly to the house "so that he could coax with his Mummy"

The following day the mother accompanied the child on his walk. But his state of anxiety was still present. On returning home the child said that he "was afraid of being bitten by a horse" and in the evening he was afraid "a horse'll come into the room".

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Thus, *we see a fixation of anxiety placed on the horse*. Freud considered that this sequence explains the emergence of the phobia as a situation which triggered his infantile neurosis. He analyzed the dream as a *nightmare*; that is, as a *dream of repression*. Faithful to his first theory of anxiety, he holds that its emergence is the result of a repression which has led to a separation between the libido and the cathected maternal object. The libido, invested up until now in the maternal object, is freed and transformed into a free-floating anxiety which will become fixed to the horse object.

For Freud, this repression is the indication that the prohibition of the mother, the prohibition of incest, has already occurred. This supposes then that in the process we discussed, the paternal function has already been inscribed as a function.

When Lacan takes up this case, he examines what sort of relation links up the mother and the child in order to find the origin of the anxiety. Hans, he says, is taken by his mother as an "all." He is "entirely" taken up by the mother in the totality of his being and his body. He is not loved as a "bearer of the penis" but as a "phallopore," or representative of the phallus. If Hans were able to put up with this situation for a long time and play at being the mother's phallus the dimension of the as if and of *the game* is important and indicates that Hans has not chosen a perverse position--to act as if it were him who was giving satisfaction to his mother, he could play at being the one who occupies the place of the lack opened up by the desire of the Other, here the desire of the mother. Confronted with the lack in the Other, by its position as desiring, the child can reply with a "semblant" of the phallus. But this apparently idyllic, or at least stabilized situation of the game with the mother is *upset* by the events which we have pointed out; in particular the appearance of *masturbatory jouissance* and *the birth of his sister, Anna*.

Hans is confronted with a contradiction: the mother who had loved him so "completely" leaves no places for his *Wiwimacher* as the place of his own jouissance. The mother sanctions something coming from the child, marking it as inappropriate to satisfy her. Through this the question of the mother's desire is posed for Hans, as we have pointed out: what does she want? The mediation of the Name-of-the-Father and the metaphorical substitution ought to respond to this question, allowing the inscription of the phallus in the place of the Other as a signifier of

lack. It is this that fails to take place. Hans remains suspended in relation to a question. And it is in the gap that this question opens up that his phantasy of

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devoration is organized. that of being bitten and devoured by the horse. In this sense, Hans' anxiety is the index of his relation to his mother. It is an anxiety concerning the possibility of the mother's jouissance in which he would remain trapped as an object. It is thus not a "castration anxiety". Hans remains at the mercy of that maternal being who has become the place of a question without a reply. This shows the destabilizing, indeed destructive, character of the maternal threat of castration when there has been a flaw in the transmission of symbolic castration.

Why did this flaw occur? Hans finds himself in between what Lacan described as the imaginary compound and the symbolic compound. The presence of a fourth element is necessary for the latter to be set into place, that of a third person, the father. In this case, it is the real father, the papa, who is appealed to as the one who must state the law, that of the prohibition of incest. This permits the separation, the demarcation line between the mother and the child. Hans' father is not absent, but, on the contrary, he is there, busy with his child whom he loves enormously. But something is missing in the relation he maintains with the child's mother. And the message which he would have to transmit does not get through. Hans' adventure is situated between the fault or flaw in what binds this man and this woman together, who are the producers of the child. So, we have set out the factors at play in the circumstances that gave birth to Hans' phobia.

Now let us comment on the role of the "anxiety horse" for Hans. Although he did not have an explicit theory of the father as a signifier, Freud, nevertheless, located very clearly the linguistic origin of this "horse," which could explain in part why it was chosen as the privileged signifier, a signifier set aside from the others. The key is the homophony between *Wegen dem Pferd* and *Wägen-Pferd*. "Cause of the horse" on the one hand and the "vehicle-horse" on the other. The phrase "cause of the horse" had emerged when a friend of Hans repeated "cause of the horse" incessantly when they were on holiday. It's "cause of the horse" that all this happened, a foot wound sustained while playing the horse. It is this resonance in "cause" which would explain the privileged singling out of the horse. In any case, the question of the choice of the phobic object remains open. It can be any object and yet it must be capable of being taken from a limited battery of signifiers. Thus, *in contrast to the contingency of the phobic object*, what matters is the possibility of elevating it to the function of a signifier, the *fusion of*

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the constitution of the list, of the battery in which these objects are taken up.

Moreover, the passage from animal phobia to the elevation of the animal to the function of a signifier in the case of Hans will be operated after what we can pinpoint as *Freud's interpretation*.

The "signifier horse" will have a very particular status. It is an isolated signifier, cut off from a signification established by the rules of use of semantics; an "all-purpose" signifier, a sort of zero signifier whose value is determined according to the place it occupies in the many fantastic productions which Hans will produce with increasing speed after Freud's interpretation.

Contrary to Freud's approach, Lacan does not view the horse as the representative or symbol of the father: it makes up for this symbol, stands in its place, which is not the same thing. It can refer, according to the contexts in which it is featured, equally to the father and the mother, to the sister Anna or to Hans himself. The horse signifier thus takes on the function of a signifier "on its own," separated from the others, which is that of the Name-of-the-Father. While also being a signifier like the others, it is different from them or exceptional in that it regulates and orders the set of signifieds.

Before functioning as a signifier in the phobia, when the "horse" becomes fixed to the animal itself, it is also used to produce a certain ordering; at least that of establishing a sort of organization of space which determines those journeys that are possible and those to be avoided. The transport complex that Hans develops is a way of formulating the difficulty of being hitched up--like the horse--to the maternal vehicle, while simultaneously wanting to distance himself in following a complicated circuit which will allow him to end up somewhere all the same in this distance.

Let us examine the interpretation of Freud that proves to be so important in the evolution of Hans' neurosis. In the single meeting between Freud and Hans, the latter accompanied by his father, Freud intervenes at the very heart of the problem without letting himself be led astray by the multiplicity of the 'material' presented by the child's father. Indeed, he immediately confronts Hans with the Oedipal drama. He injects, so to speak, an Oedipus, introducing him to the universalizing function of the Oedipus.

He does this on the 30th of March in the following way: Freud tells Hans that he's afraid of his father precisely because he loves his mother so much. Freud says to him: "Long before he was in the world . . . I had known that a Little Hans would come who would be

so fond of his mother that he would be bound to feel afraid of his father because of it; and I had told his father this".

Hans denies what emerges from the sentimental phenomenology of the Oedipus as Freud had put it to him. It's not true at all. He doesn't hate his father. On the contrary, he loves him greatly. Nonetheless, the child is filled with wonder at the Professor's words which stated that "Long before he was in the world I had known . . ." He will then say to his father: does the Professor talk with God to know everything in advance? Freud only sees a "boast" in his own words and insists on the value of his interpretation on the side of the hate towards the father that the child does not feel consciously. Thus, Freud will evaluate his interpretation and its results: "I had partly interpreted his fear of horses for him; the horse must be his father--whom he had good internal reasons for fearing. Certain details of which Hans had shown he was afraid, the black on horses' mouths and the things in front of their eyes--seemed to me to have been directly transposed from his father on to the horses". Freud interprets the black around the horses' mouth as the moustache of the father. What the horse has in front of its eyes are the father's glasses.

Lacan sees all this differently. The child is not in the Oedipus, and thus there's no ground to attribute to him a hatred of the father which he doesn't feel, a rivalry with the father centering around the mother. Hans is, rather, "at the threshold of the Oedipus," and the horse will appear in order to let him enter it. The desire for the father's death will emerge later, after the horse, and not before. The horse is, thus, not the element which allows Hans to express this hatred of the father which would then be repressed: rather, it makes up for the paternal function, takes the

place of this function. It allows Hans to construct myths. Lacan followed Lévi-Strauss' definition of myth. A myth functions to resolve contradictions. Something which at first seemed inadmissible (the real penis in the imaginary compound) is situated in a second logical time in a sufficient way, at least, Lacan says, to avoid the conjunction of the imaginary and anxiety which is called a phobia. What pertains to the realm of contradiction and impossibility at the time of the emergence of the phobia will then be symbolized via the successive articulation of all the forms of impossibility that were there at the start.

To illustrate this, we can invoke the series: 1) impossibility of separating from the mother; 2) impossibility of leaving with the father; 3) leaving with the (paternal) grand mother and coming back

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to get the father. This constitutes the logical framework of a series of fantasies which are linked together. It is precisely in this value of the myth for resolving contradiction that Lacan situates the effectiveness of Freud's interpretation. It lies, so to speak, less in the truth value of the statement than in the value of the enunciation, the place of universality indicated by the "Long before your birth I already knew". It is the value as myth that is effective because it introduces the particular child to a function of universalization from which function he will have to situate himself, even if it is in the form of a particular and non-typical resolution of his Oedipus. Freud offers Hans a myth of origins and thus Hans can situate the element which is absent in relation to this "universal" version; he can thus establish his own particular version of the father, his "père-version". So he receives the version of what "a father ought to be" which is not to be confused with what his real father in fact is. Yet, does Hans get through all this, thanks to his horse? Does he resolve his Oedipus? The production of two "final" fantasies are seen by Freud as constituting a definitive sign of the resolution of the Oedipus. Lacan does not agree.

Two fantasies are involved here: The marriage of Hans' father to his grandmother and the "plumber" fantasy. On the 30th of April, Hans continues, as he often does, to play with what he calls his imaginary children. The following dialogue with his father takes place. Father: are your children still alive? You know quite well a boy can't have children. Hans: I know I was their Mummy before, now I'm their Daddy. Father: and who are the children's Mummy? Hans: why Mummy, and you're their Granddaddy. Father: so then you'd like to be as big as me, and to be married to Mummy, and then you'd like her to have children. Hans: yes, that's what I'd like, and then my Lainz Grandmummy (i.e. Hans' father's mother) will be their Grannie."

Freud comments that it's all turned out well. Hans has forced an "elegant" solution. The Little Oedipus has found a much more fortunate solution than the one prescribed by destiny. Instead of "killing" his father, he displaces him by one generation and offers him the same happiness that he is after himself; indeed, in consecrating his grandfather, he marries him to his own mother and simultaneously frees him from his own mother, i.e., Hans' mother.

Lacan, contrary to Freud, will see this fantasmatic construction as the sign that the Oedipus has not been resolved. By the reduplication of the maternal lineage, Hans can stay inscribed

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within it. He maintains his identification with the maternal phallus via the intermediary of these "imaginary children": the children he would have been able to conceive with his own mother. He will have access to heterosexuality, but women will always be women-children for him (girl-phalluses). As for his sister Anna, he sets her up as a sort of Ego Ideal wherein he as the masculine subject will give himself to the woman as being that something that she lacks herself and bring her the phallus as that which she lacks in an imaginary sense. He will thus devote himself to the completeness of the Woman.

Hans, says Lacan, will be a "Little man--capable of having children, capable of creating them indefinitely in his imagination. He will thus conceive "spiritual children". Indeed, Herbert Graf became an artist, an opera director, and never had any real children.

Let us examine another fantasy, that of the plumber: on the 2nd of May, 1907, Hans says to his father: the plumber came; and first he took away my behind with a pair of pincers, and then gave me another, and then the same with my widdler. He said, "Let me see your behind" and I had to turn round, and he took it away; and then he said "Let me see your widdler". The father, according to Freud, grasps the nature of this fantasy and has no doubt at all about the only possible interpretation. Father: he gave you a bigger behind. Hans: yes. Father: like Daddy's, because you'd like to be Daddy. Hans: yes. For Freud, this construction corresponds to a symbolic resolution of the Oedipus. The anxiety has been transformed into a happy expectation. The plumber (the doctor) comes and takes off his penis, but only in order to put another larger one "like Daddy's" in its place.

However, Lacan sees no trace of a "replacement" in this construction. It is, rather, the father who added this, stating that the penis is replaced and Freud ratified this intervention. In this fantasy of removal, there is indeed a transformation: Another Little Hans emerged, he interprets, as his "bottom". For Lacan, Hans does not have to lose his penis since he had never acquired it. He accedes to masculinity via identification with the maternal phallus. It would seem that nothing would prevent the basic step being taken, the step which allows the male child to symbolically possess the penis in the sense that he must accept it as "lost," subject to castration; and yet Hans settles for the position of substitute of the phallus in his life, his passage through the Oedipus operated by an identification with the maternal phallus. Herbert Graf, the Little Hans of the

analytic literature, will be a sort of knight in the service of ladies. He will maintain heterosexual legality, but in the position of a fetish object, an object *facticio* for women. If, for Lacan, Hans has not resolved the Oedipus and remains at the level of the "imaginary phallus," then the question arises as to what all the fuss of the phobia and the production of myths was really for? Lacan replies: "To cover what we can call the complete circle of what emerges as both a possible exit and an exit impossible to take, once the circuit has been run through something has taken place which signifies that the subject has placed himself at *the level of question.*"

It is also for this reason that Hans will be a neurotic rather than a pervert. A horse, an animal-object, is raised to the function of a privileged signifier, the signifier of the Name-of-the-Father, which can provide a certain response to the mother's desire in the metaphorical substitution by which the subject can be situated in his relation to the phallus, as signifier of the lack in the Other.

Notes

1. Jacques Lacan, *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan, Livre IV (1956-57): La relation d'objet* (Unpublished Seminar, to appear with Seuil, March, 1994), text established by Jacques-Alain Miller.
2. Sigmund Freud, 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy (1909)," *SE* 10: 3-149.
3. Sigmund Freud, "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926 [1925])," *SE* 20: 75-176.
4. Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905)," *SE* 7: 125-245.