

The other French Freud: Didier Anzieu – the story of a skin

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NB all translations are mine, and reference is to the original; abbreviations see Bibliography

On 10 December 1890, a fatal accident befell a five-year-old child called Marguerite Pantaine, the daughter of a farming family in Chalignac, in the *département* of Cantal in the Massif central. Here are two versions of the event:

1 The family talk a lot about a violent emotion the mother suffered while she was pregnant with my patient. The eldest daughter died as the result of a tragic accident: she fell, before her mother's very eyes, into the wide-open door of a lighted stove and died very rapidly of severe burns. JL 174-5

2 [My mother] was the third child in the family, the third or fourth... That's the problem. Before her, in fact, three daughters were born. The family lived in a large stone house close to the stable and the fields. The main room was heated by a large fireplace filled with big burning logs, where they cooked, and there were benches in it that you could sit on. This happened before my mother was born. It was a feast-day. Marguerite, the youngest of the three daughters, had an organdie dress on, ready to go to church. She'd been left for a moment in the charge of the eldest girl, the one who was to become my godmother. The child was lightly dressed, it was cold, she went up to the fire to warm herself... and was burnt alive. It was a dreadful shock for her parents and her two sisters. So my mother was conceived as a replacement for the dead child. And since she was another girl, they gave her the same name, Marguerite. The living dead, in a way... It's no coincidence that my mother spent her life finding ways to escape from the flames of hell... It was a way of accepting her fate, a tragic fate. My mother only spoke openly of this once. But I knew it as a family legend. I think her depression goes back to this untenable position. APP 19-20

The variation between these two versions shows how a 'family legend' (which will also become a 'fate' carried through several generations) twists and turns to serve the vagaries of later causalities. Was the dead girl the eldest or the youngest? Was it a gaping stove or an ingle-nook fireplace? Was it a sister or the mother who witnessed the terrible event and should have been taking better care? Was the mother pregnant when it happened or did she become so to replace her lost daughter, whether firstborn or lastborn? What they agree on is the shock to the whole family, and the long-lasting effects not just on the parents and living sisters but on the siblings that followed. In fact the child who died was the eldest, not the youngest, of the three sisters and the mother Jeanne was not pregnant with the second Marguerite when the first was killed, but (possibly) with a baby who was declared stillborn the following August. The second Marguerite was born in July 1892.

The first version cited above is that of Jacques Lacan, who met Marguerite Pantaine, by then Marguerite Anzieu, in April 1931, when she was arrested and then sectioned for attacking a famous stage actress with a knife. Lacan wrote his doctoral thesis on Marguerite Anzieu under the pseudonym of 'Aimée', using her case-history as a prototype of the role of personality in psychopathic development. Paranoiac behaviour did not begin in the generation of 'Aimée' - her mother Jeanne **3** has a reputation in the family for having "persecution mania" (JL 174) - and it is reasonable to suppose that it was exacerbated by the sudden death of her child. There was, in any case, a special closeness, a kind of friendship, between Jeanne and Marguerite, while it was a sister who took over maternal care of Marguerite and her three younger brothers.

The second version cited above is that of Didier Anzieu (1923-1999), in a set of interviews conducted in 1983, when he was sixty. He goes on:

4 I might put it this way – it sounds banal, but in my case it seems true: I became a psychoanalyst to care for my mother. Not so much to care for her in reality, even though I did succeed in helping her, in the last quarter of her life, to find a relatively happy, balanced life. What I mean is, to care for my mother in myself and other people. To care, in other people, for this threatening and threatened mother...

APP 20

The double significance of the absent mother – threatening as much as threatened, damaged as much as damaging, and damaging, no doubt, *because* damaged – informs both the life and the work of Didier Anzieu. Before looking at his theory of the skin-ego, I want to examine the complex configurations of similarity, engagement and replacement that preceded his birth.

To begin with, there is the doubling of given names. His mother was the fourth of her name within three generations: both her grandmothers were called Marguerite. While her dead sister was named only Marguerite, she was given her mother's name also, in second place: Marguerite Jeanne Pantaine. To enter and inhabit another person's name – in the Pantaine family everyone except Didier's mother seems to have had at least one nickname – is a sign of one kind of position 'inside the skin of the other'. *Secondly*, replacement in this family structure – a girl serving as mother to her younger sister, or even to her own disturbed mother, one child replacing another, a godmother replacing the birth-mother who happens to be her sister, not only in relation to the son but also to the husband – all these replacements do not supersede the first relationship but coexist with it, as if 'ghosted' by it or wrapped inside it.

In interviews and his rare autobiographical writings, Anzieu speaks very little of Élise, referring to her, where he specifies at all who is meant by the generic couple 'my parents', as his godmother. But his report that in family legend she was implicitly more at fault than the child's mother for the death of the first Marguerite suggests that Élise's role as carer in relation to the irresponsibility of either of the family 'madwomen' makes her the psychic substitute for the dangerous mother: neither mother nor dangerous, and therefore seemingly of little interest. What Didier becomes, as a 'good' analyst, is that figure of sanity that remains ghosted by the insanity it contains. A *third* cause of that 'ghosting' (skin containing other skins) is a parallel between Marguerite Anzieu's position and that of her son. When did her madness begin? Anzieu has two, connected suggestions. The first is that it may have been set in train before she was born, with the burden of being the replacement child, the second that she was affected by her own two pregnancies:

5 Why was she depressed? Because of her sensitive character. It made her unable to deal with my birth, which brought back the terrible memory of the stillborn baby. And why this sensitivity? I think it was due to the circumstances of her own birth. [...]

My mother only spoke openly of this once. But I knew it as a family legend. I think her depression goes back to this untenable position. She had put it off after the birth of her little girl who was stillborn, which seemed an implacable repetition of fate. And then my birth, which was successful, brought back that intolerable threat...

APP 19-20

Marguerite's daughter was healthy but died as a result of getting the cord caught around her neck and she attributed the disaster to the influence of a woman friend who had phoned during the birth. She remained **6** hostile, withdrawn and silent for many long days (JL 160).

7 A second pregnancy put her back into a similar state of depression, anxiety and paranoia. A child was brought to term the following July (the patient was thirty years old). She devoted herself to him with passionate ardour; no one but she took care of him until the age of five months. She breastfed him until the age of fourteen months. While she was breastfeeding she became more and more paranoid, hostile to everyone and quarrelsome. Everyone was a threat to her child. She made a scene over some motorists who drove too close to her child's pram. All the neighbours objected. She wanted to take the affair to court. JL 160

Looking back to his childhood, Didier Anzieu described himself once, rather dramatically, in a draft autobiography, as 8 unloved, the son of unloved people (APP 36), but on another occasion, as over-loved: 9 I couldn't go out of doors without being bundled up several times over: jumper, coat, beret, muffler. The layers of my parents' care, worries and warmth never left me, even when I lived far away from home. I carried it like a weight on my shoulders. My vitality was hidden at the centre of an onion, under several skins (APP 14-15). There is, he says, a direct line from this to his theory of the skin-ego and psychic envelopes. It relates, of course, to the other burden he was carrying, in the person of his dead sister – to the wearing of what seem to have been a *girl's* multiple skins. Let us not forget the fact that while Marguerite Pantaine was clothed in the name and burnt skin of a lost sibling of the same sex and who had lived five years, Didier her son, born on 8 July 1923, was clothed in the wrappings of a child of the other sex, who neither lived nor grew and whose skin had not yet formed beyond the womb.

While saying almost nothing about his godmother, Anzieu refers to Marguerite as – unlike him or René, both only children – born in a large family and having 10 tastes and intellectual gifts that I certainly inherited (APP 16); he also describes her as succumbing, once Élise took over in the home, to 11 her own latent pathology so that 12 madness became a familiar reality to me early on, full of problems, heavy with menace, but a reality that I always did and still do know how to face up to firmly. Freud explains the attraction of fantasy literature in terms of its “disturbing strangeness”; madness to me stood for the experience of a “disturbing familiarity” (APP 17).

In the second part of this paper I want to keep this in mind: a male psychoanalyst who becomes one because he senses – with uncanny *familiarity* – dwelling inside his history, mind and body, a mother who is both lost and known, threatening and threatened. In his theory, the concept of *containment* will be paramount – the idea that what is important (after Klein) is to look not so much at the positioning, function and significance of *contents* but of the shapes and spaces that contain. I will present - not certain whether this will be very, somewhat or not at all known to you - Anzieu's theory of the skin-ego (*moi-peau*). Then I will suggest ways in which it can open up new ways of thinking about gender and desire – I hope, provoking some discussion.

Anzieu's first publications (based on his two doctoral theses and published in 1956 and 1959) were a study of psychodrama and a long and detailed examination of Freud's self-analysis – he remained fascinated by self-analysis until the last publication in his lifetime, a quirky book on Beckett (1998). He wrote fiction, dramas, a book of cartoons and a powerful reading of the events of 1968 – which he was right in the middle of, having accepted the chair of Psychology at Nanterre in 1964. His work ran along three distinct but obviously connected lines: the first, on psychodrama and groups; the second on self-analysis and creativity; and the third and undoubtedly the most resonant, on the *moi-peau*, or *skin-ego*, the theory of psychic envelopes, and its development into his theory of thought [*le penser*].

Because of course time is limited, I am going to talk only about the third strand. But before I do, I'd like to mention a concept that Anzieu mentions first in a book that appeared

two years after *Le Moi-peau*, in in 1987 (in *Les Enveloppes psychiques* [*Psychic Envelopes*]) : the concept of the '*signifiant formel* **13** formal signifier (AEP 1). These signifiers are characterised by their dynamic nature; they are concerned with **14** changes of form (AEP 1); they are spatial, capturing **15** the psychic properties of space (AEP 6), and represent, not psychic contents, but psychic containers.

Each individual's fundamental formal signifier derives from a time when they are not yet capable of repression, still tied in psychically to the 'common skin' with the mother. Its structure is different from that of phantasy. It takes the form of a sentence that has a subject and a verb but no object-complement; often the verb is reflexive (in French); and the subject is a part of the body or an isolated physical form, never a whole person. It is not a scene or an enactment but **16** the geometrical or physical transformation of a body (in the general sense of a portion of space) which entails a deformation or destruction of form (AEP 15). The space in which it appears is two-dimensional, and the patient senses it as external to themselves. Anzieu gives examples: **17** a vertical axis is reversed; a support collapses; a hole sucks in [...] a solid body is crossed; a gaseous body explodes; [...] an orifice opens and closes; [...] a limit interposes; different perspectives are juxtaposed; [...] my double leaves or controls me; [...] a retreating object abandons me (AEP 15-16). In the book I am working on at the moment, I have been looking, in relation to various cultural figures and artefacts, for the formal signifiers they represent, and taking as the presiding issue of each chapter a formal signifier rephrased as a question – a question of gender and desire. For instance, the characteristic formal signifier of Gide's desire, for instance, is twofold: 'a compulsion to empty the body of its fluid content', and 'a straight line that ends in a swerve', that of the public figure of Princess Diana 'a circle around, into and out of, the surface-point of the skin', three competing versions of desire 'zooming, hovering and the caress'...

The theory of the skin ego is premised on the central importance of the body to psychic life. In Freud's time, Anzieu wrote in 1975, 'what was repressed was sex', now the ignored and repressed issue was the body. Since Lacan, the stress on language had meant that the body was not being psychoanalytically theorised; yet **18** every psychic activity leans on a biological function (AMP 61). **19** Psychic space and physical space constitute each other in reciprocal metaphors', wrote Anzieu in 1990; 'the Skin-ego is one of these metaphors (AEN 58)

He begins his presentation by looking at its context. In the late 20th century (he wrote this, presciently, in 1975), with a world running out of control, there is a need 'to set limits'; the typical patient is no longer a neurotic suffering from hysteria or obsessions but a borderline case (that is, on the border between neurosis and psychosis) whose problem is a lack of limits. Maths, biology, and neuro-physiology have all become sciences of interfaces, membranes and borders, and embryology has shown that the ectoderm forms both the brain and the skin; thus **20** the centre is situated at the periphery (AMP 31). The skin, like any shell or peel, has a double surface, one inside the other – **21** a protective one on the outside and, underneath it or in its orifices, the other, which collects information and filters exchanges (AMP 31) – and this complex structure of surfaces, rather than the old image of thought penetrating through into a truth-core, can help us understand the physical, psychical and intellectual worlds in a different way.

The skin is **22** an almost inexhaustible subject of research, care and discourse (AMP 34); the largest and heaviest organ of the body, it combines together different organs, senses, the spatial and the temporal dimension, sensitivity to heat, balance, movement; unlike the other sense-organs, it cannot refuse an impression, and we can live without other senses, but not without our skin. It appears on the embryo before the other sense systems; its outward look varies enough to give off the signs of age, sex, ethnicity and personality, it consists of no fewer than five kinds of tissue and it is the site of endless paradoxes:

23 The skin is permeable and impermeable. It is superficial and profound. It is truthful and deceptive. It regenerates, yet is permanently drying out. [...] It provokes libidinal investments as often narcissistic as sexual. It is the seat of well-being and seduction. It supplies us as much with pain as pleasure.[...] In its thinness and vulnerability, it stands for our native helplessness, greater than that of any other species, but at the same time our evolutionary adaptiveness. It separates and unites the various senses. In all these dimensions that I have incompletely listed, it has the status of an intermediary, an in-between, a transitional thing. AMP 39

The main basis for this theory lies in the ethological research on attachment in young mammals and humans by Harlow and Bowlby. Infants cling or grasp on to their mother and when she is out of reach they show despair. In the 1960s, Harlow proved that a baby rhesus monkey preferred an artificial mother made of wire if it was cloth-covered and warm even if it did not give milk. Bowlby's research on attachment and loss and that of Winnicott, originally a paediatrician, on 'good-enough mothering', stress the way in which the infant needs and uses the early relationship with the mother (or her substitute) to establish not only security but also the ability to learn to play independently. Anzieu sums up: **24** the pleasure of the contact with the mother's body and the faculty of clinging are thus at the basis of both attachment and separation (AMP 49).

Freud's view of infant care focuses on feeding, but he notes the global contentment of the satisfied baby. After him, object-relations psychoanalysts use the concept of the breast to stand for the way the child introjects and projects part-objects; but Klein does not consider the whole system of infant care, and **25** the surface of the body is absent (AMP 58) from her theory. Holding, in the broader sense, is introduced by Winnicott and it was left to other analysts, both British and French, to introduce the idea that the infant introjects the pattern of containment provided by the mother and such concepts as the 'apparatus to think thoughts' (Bion), the soft or rigid ego (Frances Tustin), the defensive 'muscular skin' (Esther Bick) the shell and kernel (Nicolas and Torok) or the **26** mutual inclusion of the bodies of mother and child (Sami-Ali) (AMP 59). An infant, under its mother's care, receives both stimulation and communication, and thus

27 the establishment of the Skin-ego responds to the need for a narcissistic envelope and creates, for the psychic apparatus, the assurance of a constant, certain, basic well-being. [...] By 'Skin-ego' I am referring to a configuration used by the child's ego during its early stages of development to represent itself as an ego containing psychic contents, based on its experience of the surface of the body.

AMP 61

Ultimately, out of this first configuration, **28** the Skin-ego is the foundation for the possibility of thinking (AMP 62).

In its earliest days, the baby not only receives care but also gives out signals to its family circle and needs to begin exploring the physical world around it. In the mother-child dyad it is no passive partner: by a sort of 'feedback' process, it solicits as much as responds and can withdraw as much as be neglected: exchanging looks, smiles, noises and sense-impressions, it **29** acquires a power of endogenous mastery that develops from a sense of confidence into a euphoric feeling of unlimited omnipotence (AMP 80); such over-confidence is necessary for it to move forward to further affective and sensori-motor enterprises. Babies have a 'bodily pre-ego' which gives them the confidence to develop as individuals; and this is based on reliable feedback from a '**30** twinned (AMP 81) other of a kind that, later will, be echoed in love relationships. Touch is the first sense-faculty to develop embryonically and thus **31** the skin is the basic reference point for all the various sense data (AMP 83); and because touch is the only reflexive sense – I feel myself feeling, touch myself touching – it

gives rise gradually to the reflexivity of thought. Thus **32** to have an ego is to fold in upon oneself (AMP 84). The baby develops the phantasy of a **33** skin common to the mother and the child, an interface with the mother on one side and the child on the other (AMP 85) – again an illusion of reciprocal inclusion that is **34** revived in the experience of love, in which each, holding the other in their arms, envelops the other while being enveloped by them (AMP 85). But just as love can fail, the common skin can appear too tight, too loose or violently torn away, leading to pathologies of the skin-ego.

The eight main functions of the skin-ego, and their potential pathologies: holding – containing – protection against stimuli – individuation – consensuality – sexualisation – libidinal recharging – inscription – and ninthly (last fairy at christening), toxicity.

Anzieu goes on to describe the 'double taboo on touching', which every child encounters and without which there is no possibility of moving from the skin-ego stage to that of thought; it precedes the oedipal taboo, which would not be possible without it. **35** Touch is fundamental only on condition that, at the right moment, it is forbidden (AMP 165). Thus the child is not allowed to touch itself or other people on certain parts of the body, is required to keep away from fires or windows and made to hold an adult's hand when out of doors. In the classic Freudian psychoanalytic setting, no touching is permitted, unless exceptionally it is the conventional handshake at parting; and the '*Noli me tangere*' of the resurrected Jesus represents another version of the repudiation of physical proximity for spiritual distance. The taboo on touching is double in a number of ways. It controls both sexual and aggressive impulses; it concerns both internal and external contacts and forms a distinction or interface between them, separating family-space from that of the dangerous 'outside world'; it forbids the touch of the whole body (continued clinging to the mother) and, later, masturbatory touching with the hands; finally, it is bilateral, for its requirements apply to the adult who forbids as well as the child who is being disciplined. The taboo on touching is what sends us from an early echo-tactile form of communication towards a skin-ego that becomes **36** the space of inter-sensorial inscription (AMP 178) and as for psychoanalysis, it uses the setting to recreate the effects of tactile contact by the very work of replacing the physical by the psychical.

I want to turn now to some new questions about gender and desire that I think Anzieu's theory can help us ask.

All human bodies have skin, just as they all live in a world that makes them both sexed and gendered. The skin-ego offers us the possibility of a psychoanalytic theory in which sexual difference is not just, as Thomas Laqueur has it, a question of thinking of humans as being of one differentiated sex or two wholly distinct sexes, but where modes of difference are not inherently hierarchical. It is a theory centred on the body metaphor which removes castration from the position it holds in all other psychoanalytic theories. In it, the penis-phallus is no longer the leading organ, and thus we are not divided by our possession or non-possession of it, however nuanced, politicised or symbolic. Thought is **37** an affair of relations between surfaces (AMP 32). And similarly, sexuality depends on areas of the skin – and thus psychic skin – which are, in various ways, as the anatomical term has it, 'invaginated':

38 This wisely reminds us that the vagina is not an organ with a specific structure but a fold of the skin, like the lips, anus, nose or eyelids, without a hardened layer or protective cornea to protect against stimuli and where the mucous membrane is exposed and sensitivity and erogeneity are on the surface of the skin, culminating together with a surface that is equally sensitive, that of the male gland at the tip of the erection. And everyone knows perfectly well, unless they amuse themselves by reducing love to the contact of two epidermises, which does not always result in the full intended pleasure, that love has the paradoxical quality of allowing us to experience simultaneously, with the same person, the deepest psychical contact and

the best epidermal contact. Thus, the three fundamental bases of human thought, the skin, the cortex and sexual coupling correspond to three configurations of the surface: the envelope, the cap and the pouch. AMP 32

Sexual relations take place where bodies meet, at the touch of two skins. All bodies have especially sensitive points. The sense of touch is both the earliest and the highest sense, the one that combines the rest in a consensual web, the only one that requires proximity to set its imagination going. It is also the only one that is intrinsically reflexive: a child touching parts of its body with its finger experiences two complementary sensations, **39** being a piece of skin touching at the same time as being a piece of skin that is touched. The other sensorial reflexivities are built on the model of tactile reflexivity (hearing oneself make a sound, smelling one's own odour, looking at oneself in the mirror) and these lead to the reflexivity of thought (AMP 84). So if human beings are able to feel and think, to be aware of feeling and thinking, it is not by means of a genital organ that some have and others lack - or even that everyone lacks but everyone desires - but by means of the universal human organ, our skin.

There is something potentially idyllic about this psychological premise: even though the skin is potentially the site of loss, terror and pain, it does not divide us by either gender or sexual object-choice. Containment and contact are common beginnings.

How may the skin-ego be nevertheless problematic for a gender politics? We return to the question of the maternal. All of us start life in the womb and enter the world by taking our first breath in a space that is no longer the womb. Massaged or tormented by the passage of labour, we leave a universe in which we are not yet capable of desire because our material needs are met without demand and in which the mother is not a person but a place. Many attachment theorists locate the initial relationship of infant to mother in pre-natal life, but what changes at the instant of birth is that the place begins to become a person. Yet for many months she is a person who cannot be construed as such - for many people she is never construed as having the full span of human faculties but remains a plus- or minus-function of sufficient love. Even the good-enough-mother is actually never really good enough, because she must meet and hold the child's needs with such an ideal and unthought rhythm of provision and separation that it is enabled to do without her. The primary couple that enables a person to learn first the loop of reciprocation and then how to 'be alone in the presence of the other' requires in its senior partner, the female adult, such a perfectly subtle balance of activities and passivities that the junior, her child, develops by coming to ignore the fact that she is there (or not there) just as it ignored her when it was in her womb.

Winnicott expects the mother, in the early weeks, to be in a state of identificatory 'preoccupation' that parallels the psychic needs of the neonate, and Bion describes her action of taking the 'beta elements' of the child's chaotic impulses and binding them into the 'alpha elements' of symbolisation, dream or thought not as intelligence but as 'reverie' (Bion 36). For these reasons, perhaps, he uses the female symbol ♀ to stand for the container, a logical enough choice. But he goes on to represent the contained entity as ♂. This follows the logic by which western tradition finds it almost impossible to model the mother-child couple as ♀ ♂, but insists on a ♀ ♂ pairing that it would not require in instances of authors and readers or analysts and patients. And when it comes to it, the nipple in the mouth is another ♂ in a ♀, even though this places the mother in the illogical position of carrying the masculine symbol, on the familiar grounds that inserters are always masculine in contradistinction to feminine insertees. This is a useful instance of gender not being blindly mapped onto sex, but it follows a logic of active-passive differentiation that fails to meet the complexity of the case.

By conceiving his function as a psychoanalyst as being 'to care for my mother in myself and other people', by recognising, paradoxically, that the group illusion is that of 'a throng of children in the mother's womb or of the mother in the children's womb', or by describing creativity as relying on an **40** internal mother (ACO 75), Anzieu represents a different view of the containing function of the maternal. As well as offering the skin as an

organ that gives no primacy to male or female, his theory develops that of Bion by taking the femininity of containment and universalising it. Every connection between individuals, whether synchronic or diachronic – within or across generations – is a structure of Russian dolls. As Annie Anzieu observes, this makes every psychoanalytic act a structure of maternity based on both suffering and intelligence.

Before there can be a skin-ego every child must experience the delusion of a common skin with its mother: the phantasy **41** that the same skin belongs to the child and its mother, a skin representative of their symbiotic union [...] a cutaneous fusion with the mother (AMP 63) in which **42** the surfaces of the two bodies of the child and the mother are inseparable (ACD 184). This is paralleled, later, by the experience of lovers who **43** wrap themselves in their two imaginary maternal skins (ACD 246) and fancy that they share **44** a single psyche [...] a single body unique to the two of them, with a single skin (ACD 247). In most contexts the common skin is presented as something rather difficult to visualise: an interface not unlike the Moebius ring, **45** she on one side, he [*sic*] on the other side of the same skin (ACO 71). But sometimes it becomes something even more mysterious and similar to the paradox outlined in the last paragraph: a **46** phantasy of reciprocal inclusion' (AMP 85; see AGI 235). Actually the logic of the imagined fusion cannot really mean existing on two sides of the skin, for that would be the exact inverse of commonality. At one point in *Le Corps de l'œuvre*, another possibility is presented: referring to the mother of Borges reading to him when he was blind as she had to his blind father, Anzieu writes:

47 The image of two beings in a single body. She is the eye and the hand and the breast. He is its brain and its appendix. He is the mouth that listens to her mouth. They are the same code in different languages, the tower of Babel, a total library, and all the pleasures of Babylon. This fused body and speaking mouth speak to memories, images, feelings that each of us has preserved more or less obscurely out of what was a decisive stage in our individual psychic origins.

When I ask myself why I get such pleasure from reading and rereading Borges, I think of a poem in *El Hacedor*, which is rarely cited [...] and whose ending sums up for me what he seems to me to have been trying to say throughout his writing, his crucial experiences as a child and story-teller, the operation by which the code, any code, allows one to order and communicate everything one has felt of one's own body and that other body from which one's own is not yet quite differentiated, the body of the mother, the body of a garden, the body of a suburb. ACO 316

The 'body from which one's own is not yet quite differentiated' suggests another version of the common skin – here, as in one of Anzieu's stories, **48** a library is a vagina (ACon 11) - the prelapsarian space of life in the womb, where one single skin indeed did service for two people. Rather than an interface, this is the kind of containment that Anzieu sees as fundamental to creativity: thus Borges 'lets us share in the joyful wonderment of the child who discovers that his body coincides with a code and that he can play with that code just as his mother and he have each been playing with the body of the other'. If we remember that his theory of creation began and ended with the self-analyses of Freud and Beckett, we have another instance of the rerouting of a metaphor: self-analysis is not parthenogenesis but something more like the playing of the transitional space in which the child thinks itself alone and is not – but not even that, it is the mutual play of reciprocal inclusion, both in the same skin. What does it mean to think one is alone? Probably something rather like the 'signifiant formel': a movement or gesture that represents the action of a part of the body, not a whole person, and is tied to the idea of the common skin but has no overt knowledge of it; minimal in every sense, but all the more powerful, it is a psychic form distinct from the idea of containment but presupposing it.

Creativity and fantasy - existing inside the skin of someone else. Where this comes from, I think we can guess: not so much a fantasy as the reality of the replacement child.

Marguerite Anzieu began life as the replacement child for a sibling of the same sex who had died of burns, and whose skin was thus unimaginable as a place to be. Even her name was the same, and she grew up surrounded by family members who had known the other child and seen her die. She was, indeed, the last daughter of her family, all the children after her being sons. Didier Anzieu was born as the replacement of a child of the opposite sex, unnamed, whose death by cord strangulation was unpredictable after a successful pregnancy, the culmination of his mother's fears and the start of her paranoid terrors about his own safety. I haven't time here to look into the different significances of replacing your own sex and the other sex; for now, I want only to observe how variously we can carry another's lost body around, upon and inside us (*that's another paper*). These other bodies are our loss and our gain, an inescapable part of our skin-ego – and they are gendered and will gender us.

Didier Anzieu: biography

1890	Death of the first Marguerite Pantaine
1892	Birth of the second Marguerite Pantaine
1910	Freud sets up International Psycho-analytic Association [IPA]
1913	Marguerite moves to Melun, near Paris; works for Post Office
1917	Marguerite [henceforth MA] marries René Anzieu
1918	Élise Pantaine comes to live with MA & René; she is widowed
1922	Stillbirth of MA's daughter
1923	birth of Didier Anzieu [DA]
1924	MA leaves home but is brought back & sectioned
1925	MA leaves for Paris, visiting DA regularly at first
1926	foundation of SPP (Société psychanalytique de Paris)
1931	MA Anzieu attacks actress Huguette ex-Duflos ; after her arrest, she is hospitalised at Sainte-Anne, where she begins treatment with Lacan [JL]
1932	viva of JL's thesis on MA, later published as <i>De la psychose paranoïaque dans ses rapports avec la personnalité</i>
1938	MA is moved to Ville Evrard
1943	MA discharged; goes to live with sister Maria
1945	DA studies at the École Normale Supérieure ; hears JL lecture
1947	DA marries fellow student Annie Péghaire
1948	DA gets <i>agrégation</i> in philosophy;
1949	DA starts analysis with JL
1950	birth of Christine Anzieu
1949-51	DA teaches at secondary schools; also works at Centre Psycho-pédagogique Claude Bernard, studies psychology at a dermatology unit and gives Rorschach tests to eczema sufferers
1952	DA begins his thesis (on self-analysis) under Daniel Lagache, while teaching at the Sorbonne
1952-3	MA works as housekeeper for JL's father; during this period, DA restores contact and discovers her connection with JL
1953	JL resigns from SPP and founds Société Française de psychanalyse (SFP) – the latter is dismissed from IPA
1953	DA ends analysis with JL; critiques his Rome Discourse ; birth of Pascal Anzieu
1954	DA appointed Professor of Clinical Psychology at Strasbourg: lectures on social psychology, group psychology and psychodrama
1957	DA has viva for two theses, later published as <i>Le Psychodrame analytique</i> and <i>L'Auto-analyse de Freud et la découverte de la psychanalyse</i>
1959	SFP seeks reintegration into IPA
1961, 1963	DA gives evidence against JL to IPA
1962	DA founds Cercle d'études françaises pour la formation et la recherche active en psychologie (CEFFRAP)

1964	JL struck off from training ; the SFP collapses; JL forms the École freudienne de Paris (EFP)
1964	DA invited to chair the new Department of Psychology at Paris X (Nanterre)
1965	EFP grows & grows; foundation of Association Psychanalytique de France (APF), which DA joins
1967	death of René Anzieu
1968	DA takes part in the May events & writes a pseudonymous account
1968-9	DA works at the Ministry of Education
1974	first article by DA on the 'skin ego'
1981	death of MA; death of JL
1983	DA retires from Nanterre, aged 60
1990	DA suffers from Parkinson's
1999	death of Didier Anzieu

Didier Anzieu: main publications

1956	APA	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Le Psychodrame analytique</i> (Paris : PUF, 2000 [1956])
1959	AA-a	Anzieu, Didier, <i>L'Auto-analyse de Freud et la découverte de la psychanalyse</i> (Paris : PUF, 1998 [1959])
1961	AMé	Anzieu, Didier and Catherine Chabert, <i>Les Méthodes projectives</i> (Paris : PUF, 2003 [1961])
1968	ACI	Epistémon [Didier Anzieu], <i>Ces idées qui ont ébranlé la France</i> (Paris : Fayard, 1968)
1968	ADy	Anzieu, Didier and Jacques-Yves Martin, <i>La Dynamique des groupes restreints</i> (Paris : PUF, 2003 [1968])
1975	AGI	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Le groupe et l'inconscient</i> (Paris : Dunod, 1999 [1975, 1981])
1977	AOe	Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>L'Œdipe : un complexe universel</i> (St-Germain-du-Puy : TCHOU, 1998 [1977])
1977	APL	Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>Psychanalyse et langage</i> (Paris : Dunod, 1989 [1977])
1981	ACO	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Le Corps de l'œuvre</i> (Paris : Gallimard, 1981)
1984		Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>The Group and the Unconscious</i> , tr Benjamin Kilborne (London, Boston, Melbourne and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984)
1985	<i>see below</i>	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Le Moi-peau</i> (Paris : Dunod, 1995 [1985])
1987	AEP	Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>Les Enveloppes psychiques</i> (Paris : Dunod, 1996 [1987])
1989		Anzieu, Didier, <i>The Skin Ego</i> , tr Chris Turner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989)
1990		Anzieu, Didier, <i>A Skin for Thought</i> , tr Daphne Nash Briggs (London and New York: Karnac, 1990)
1990	AEN	Anzieu, Didier, <i>L'épiderme nomade</i> and <i>La Peau psychique</i> (Paris : Apsygée : 1990 ; Les Editions du Collège de psychanalyse groupale et familiale, 1999)
1991	APP	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Une Peau pour les pensées</i> (Paris : Apsygée, 1991)
1992		Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>Portrait d'Anzieu avec groupe</i> (Marseille : Hommes et perspectives, 1992)
1993	ACP	Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>Les Contenants de pensée</i> (Paris : Dunod, 1993)
1994	AAC	Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>L'Activité de la pensée</i> [republished as <i>Emergences et troubles de la pensée</i> 2000] (Paris : Dunod, 1994)
1994	AP	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Le Penser</i> (Paris : Dunod, 1994)
1995	ACon	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Contes à rebours</i> (n.p. : Les Belles Lettres-Archimbaud, 1995)
1995	AABC	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Mon ABC-daire</i> (Paris : Les Belles Lettres-Archimbaud, 1995)

1995	AMP	second, final version of <i>Le Moi-peau</i>
1996	ACD	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Créer Détruire</i> (Paris : Dunod, 1996)
1999	AAI	Anzieu, Didier <i>et al.</i> , <i>Autour de l'inceste</i> (Paris : Collège de Psychanalyse groupale et familiale, 1999)
1999	ABe	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Beckett</i> (Paris : Gallimard [1998], 1999)
2000	APs	Anzieu, Didier, <i>Psychanalyser</i> (Paris : Dunod, 2000)