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FRANKENSTEIN AND THE THEORY OF THE MENTAL ICEBERG

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation proposes the application of Sigmund Freud's Mental Iceberg theory in the second part of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein.* The mental processes occurring in the human psyche as presented by Freud have been largely compared and discussed. Freud's diagrams illustrating his findings have helped formulate further parallelisms and discoveries on the encounter between Victor and his creature during the turning point of the novel. Through morphosemantic and etymological aspects, this analysis offers a close psychoanalytical reading of the Victor-Creature encounter in the iceberg-like rocky hills.

RESUMEN

Este ensayo propone la aplicación de la teoría del Iceberg Mental de Sigmund Freud a la segunda parte de *Frankenstein* de Mary Shelley. Los procesos mentales ocurrentes en la psique humana como se plantean en Freud han sido comparados y tratados en profundidad. Los diagramas de Freud ilustrando tales hallazgos han ayudado a formular paralelismos y descubrimientos más a fondo en cuanto al encuentro entre Víctor y su criatura durante el punto de inflexión en la novela. Mediante aspectos morfo semánticos y etimológicos, este análisis ofrece una lectura psicoanalítica detallada del encuentro Víctor/Criatura en las colinas rocosas con aspecto de iceberg.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION: VICTOR'S MENTAL ICEBERG IN *FRANKENSTEIN*

This dissertation intends to cast further light on the encounter between Victor and his nameless Creature in the rocky hills during the second part of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* by evaluating it with the Freudian theory of the Mental Iceberg,[1] that is, the interrelationship between the conscious and the unconscious within the human psyche. My main aim is to prove that this mental iceberg turns apace with the meeting of both entities: the Creature, who stands for Victor's unconscious (or *id*), and Victor (or *ego*, the conscious self) in the rocky hills. By getting to the genesis of this Creature-Victor encounter from a psychoanalytic Freudian scope, I will demonstrate how the second volume of *Frankenstein* represents this confrontation between Victor's unconscious and his ego, and, thus, confirm its close interrelationship with Freud's theory. I will do this by extracting directly from the text the various explicit semantic and etymological references to iceberg-related notions. Although in classical psychoanalytic terms, the unconscious is intangible by definition, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* puts on display a noticeable imbalance within Victor's psyche with the apparition of the rocky hills (or turn of the mental iceberg) as perceived by the Creature (Frankenstein's *id*). This rotation of Victor's mental iceberg that takes place during the second volume of the novel initiates a set of challenges or tug-of-war strategies between Victor and the Creature which are indicative of this imbalance as will be further analysed.[2]

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[1] I will be using capital letters when referring to "the creature" so as to emphasise this departure from Victor's conscious self even though I identify both entities as belonging to and in Victor's psyque alone. Similarly, the words "mental iceberg", "ego" and "id" will also be preferred in capital letters when stressing its close and direct association with the subject, Victor. Non-capitalised italic words will be primarily used to either present a new psychoanalytical word or mark certain words in a selected passage from the novel.

[2] My take on this came to me after reading Muriel Spark's approach towards the relationship between Victor and "the daemon" as an "inter-relatedness of both", between "the hunter and the hunted". For Spark, this change of pattern in the novel occurs on the night Elisabeth is murdered. This is where my approach differs, yet originates, from Spark's: I apply this tug-of-war relationship to the second part of the novel, in which the two extremes of the iceberg seem to try and chase each other. See: Marsh, 222.

Because *Frankenstein* is characterised by a combination of Gothic and philosophical aspects, discussing it in psychoanalytical terms is very much in line with the author's interests in her novel. It was originally titled: "The Modern Prometheus". Indeed, many intellectuals were interested in this Greek myth at the time and had applied it to their own fields. In philosophy, Sigmund Freud's less-known 'the Mastery of Fire' theory alludes to the Prometheus myth.[3]

Although it is open for debate whether Sigmund Freud read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (or *The Modern Prometheus*) —his interest in the Greek myth is evident. As is well known, Prometheus stands for human resistance against the forces of nature. Given the correlation between the myth and Shelley's story, it is meaningful to include this theory in my analysis for the application of Freud's three-level psychical system. 'The Mastery of Fire' can be directly related to the 'Mental Iceberg theory' (or simply 'the iceberg theory'), a term coined posthumously. Albeit the term 'iceberg' was never mentioned in Freud's writings, similar notions —such as 'vertical architecture' and 'below the surface', 'hidden'— have grounded the term 'iceberg' as appropriate for the psyche's three levels of consciousness, which along with his earlier drawings have led critics to denominate his theory "Mental Iceberg".

2. THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION: BREAKING THE ICE WITH FRANKENSTEIN'S *ID*-ENTITY FROM A FREUDIAN PERSPECTIVE

In the late 19th century, intellectuals in the psychological sphere started feeling curious about a new non-rational view of the individual emerging as a rejection of logic and reason. Later on, triggered by the trauma and hysteria resulting from the consequences of WWI in Europe, there was an interest in psychical topography (i.e.

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[3] This approach towards myth and its correlation with fire is located in his 'The Acquisition of Fire', 1932, p. 210.

mapping the psychic motions on concrete locations of the mind), as hinted by Peter Galison (247). The quest for human knowledge increases considerably and the irrational seems as important and relevant for its understanding as the rational. The differentiation between the conscious and unconscious processes of the mind was first made by the 18th-century philosopher Friedrich Schelling and introduced into English by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (Murray 1001), and eventually developed by Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, among others. This explains why many intellectuals internationally followed these notions of the human psyche activities and started developing ideas in different formats and terminological variations, as will be seen later on with Sigmund Freud. Even though he was not the father of the unconscious,[4] Freud's role contributed to its popularity so much so that it is nowadays attributed to him primarily.

From a Freudian perspective, there are two different levels in the human psyche —one conscious and the other unconscious— which he named the Ego (*Das Ich*) and the Id (*das Es*) respectively. His theory of the interaction between the conscious and the unconscious within the human psyche has eventually come to be known as "the theory of the Mental Iceberg". In spite of not coining or even mentioning this theory of the mental iceberg, as many critics would rightfully claim, Freud's earlier pictorial diagrams of the mind resemble that of an iceberg. This could justify why many scholars have identified his ideas on the three levels of consciousness with the visual metaphor of an iceberg, labelling it "Mental Iceberg". This comes as no surprise when comparing Freud's drawings and terminological notions with an iceberg. In the following figures, we can

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[4] Although it is tempting to assume that Sigmund Freud was the true father of the Unconscious, its origin is up to debate. Samuel Taylor Coleridge allegedly gave birth to its first notions, yet it was with Freud's adoption and adaptation that the concept made its way into its significance in the world of psychoanalysis.

compare Freud's earlier drawings with his later ones and notice the evolution towards a more iceberg-like representation of his conception of the human psyche:[5]
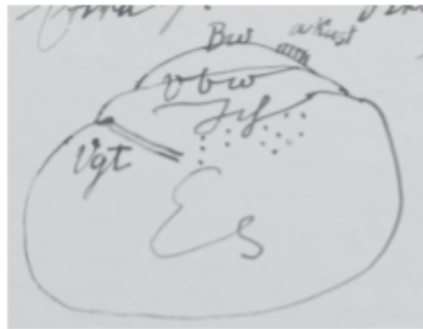

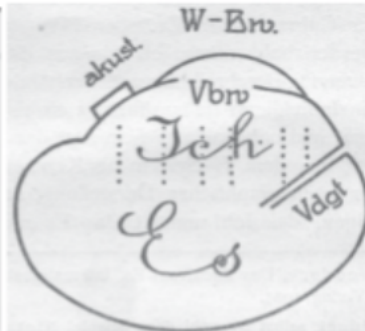Figure 1a.   Figure 1b.

Figure 2.   Figure 3.

Figures 1a and 1b reveal early diagrams drafted in 1923. Freud's first attempts to make his drawings topographic and closer to an actual physical representation of the way he understood the human mind processes are palpable with these two mirrorable drawings. Later on, as stated in his *On Aphasia* (1891), the Austrian psychoanalyst made it clear that trying to place the unconscious processes in the brain in physical terms was of no use due to its limitations. To have a better understanding of the terminology he used, however, notice a later English translation in Freud's 1932 revised diagram (Figure 2), in which the so-called superego (or *das Über-Ich*) is included.[6] Figure 3 shows a contemporary

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[5] These pictorial diagrams of an ego opposing an id can be found in his *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), and later on in *The Unconscious* (1915).

[6] It may be confused with the term "preconscious". Both refer to this threshold between the conscious and the unconscious. However, it is by means of the superego that the preconscious emerges in the ego. In a

representation that uses the iceberg as a metaphor to illustrate Freud's three levels of human consciousness (the ego, the superego and the id) and make them more comprehensible.

The prominent interest in the psyche activity during the postwar times of political censorship towards psychoanalytical texts (which were seen as useless and perjudicial) had its share of significance in the Freudian world. The previous figures show his representation of the censorship boundaries to be found in the psyche. Freud associated this political repression with psychological secrecy and hysteria (i.e. a repression within the human mind) resulting in a process of "re-territorialisation of the mind" (Galison 238). In his paper on 'Repression', Freud describes this process or dynamic as that of the unconscious ("*Ucs*.") approaching the frontier of censorship between the "*Pcs*." (preconscious) and the*"Cs"* (conscious) in an attempt to cross the threshold from the external to a new frontier of repression and eventually give rise to the emergence of the superego. Freud states:[7]

> The Ucs is turned back on the frontier of the Pcs. When, however, this intensity
> is exceeded and they try to force themselves into consciousness, they are recognised as
> derivatives of the Ucs. and are repressed afresh at the new frontier of censorship, between
> the Pcs. and the Cs (qtd. in Galison 248).

This strengthens the interrelationship between Victor (Cs.) and the Creature (Ucs.) in Shelley's novel, particularly the type of encounter they experience in the rocky hills as will be further explored. Because the unconscious is purposely trying to reach out to the conscious,[8] it is understood that the censorship or boundary has become more

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way, the superego precedes the preconscious. This is why it is best to identify the Creature with the preconscious rather than the superego when alluding to its characterisation.

[7] Gallison, op. cit. Gallison's notions stem from Sigmund Freud's "The Ego and The Id" in his *The Unconscious*. See: Strachey.

[8] Similar to Muriel Spark's notions on 'the hunter and the hunted'.

sophisticated, as noted by Galison, as if it had literally taken a step forward. In Freudian terms, this mental censorship can be found in the passageway (or threshold), which connects the conscious with the unconscious, and "its dynamic utterances of conscience" (Freud, 'On Narcissism' 97) between one another. The rocky hills serve as a symbol for this Freudian threshold, as it connects Victor's conscious with his unconscious. The dynamics behind these utterances in *Frankenstein* will be further examined in this dissertation when comparing the two different narrators, Victor and the nameless Creature, along with their longing for conscience and dominance over the other opposed identity in the second part of the novel.

In addition to Galison's interpretations of Freud's drawings, Gamwell and Solms (2006) observed how Freud moved away from a neurological approach to the human mind and was led by more "hypothetical and psychological structures" (6). Namely, from an empirical observation to a more ideational one, this explains why Freud was negligent in representing these notions with topographical models.[9] On this matter, critics like Anna J. Secor and Virginia Blum dissent terminology-wise. According to them, the fact that Freud understood the space of the psyche as exclusively metaphorical does not mean that the psyche is non-physical, for "the psyche is spatial, just not in topographical terms" (1030). However, other critics like Peter Galison understand it differently. Based on Galison's statements, which coincide with Freud's rejection of any sort of psychological location, earlier psychological diagrams present "no specific places in the brain" (247).

In spite of his little emphasis on Freud's *The Ego and the Id* as a whole, Peter Galison's focus on censorship and "re-territorialization of mind" in Freud helps create a wider understanding of the activity within Freud's three-level human conscious as much

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[9] Freud's attempt to make his drawings look more metaphorical is just another justification why the metaphor of the iceberg and concept of "the theory of the mental iceberg" does not differ much from Freud's notions and it is more grounded than meets the eye.

as it helps elaborate a stronger foundation and evidential reference for my correlation with the movements, imbalances and turns within Victor Frankenstein's psyche in *Frankenstein.*

3. ANALYTICAL DEVELOPMENT: BUILDING UP *FRANKENSTEIN*'S TURNING POINT THROUGH MORPHOSEMANTICS

The narrative time used throughout the novel contributes to the inevitable turn of the iceberg by the middle section onwards. In a way, it is as if the story was divided by the turning-of-the-iceberg phenomenon, comparable to that of an iceberg breaking off of a glacier and eventually resulting in chaos and tragedy, just like the story itself. As a first-person narrator, the unreliability of Victor's story creates a sense of disbelief that everything might just have happened within his psyche. Because it is from Victor's narrative voice that the reader finds out about Victor's past events until the turn of the mental iceberg is completed, one may find it only natural that this turn occurs in Victor's mind alone. The effects prior and following to the turn of the iceberg are directly framed by the use of words the narrator presents in the text.[10] This is why an initial morphosemantic approach is essential for the understanding of this occurrence in Victor's psyche in which his inner mechanisms are explored not only by his conscious but also his unconscious. An indicative aspect of this turn in Victor's mental processes has to do with the form: the second part of the novel starts with Victor's narrative as well as the initiation of the iceberg's flip; afterwards, the Creature is to dominate the prose, but by the time Volume II meets its end, Victor takes the narrative lead again.

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[10] Freud himself explicitly mentioned in his *The Unconscious*: "a single word can come to represent a whole train of thought" (145). I take this as an unhampered hint for freedom to dissect any words I may find which relate to the semantics of 'iceberg' or similar, without the feeling of reaching too far-fetchedly.

Provided that Frankenstein's "iceberg" is, above all, psychical, and because Freud was particularly unkeen to give it a topographical representation unless for academic purposes, the fact that Victor thinks he is walking on an icy surface as will be analysed later on, makes it the more relevant to briefly take a look at what icebergs in general might have in common with the story and in particular with Victor's Mental Iceberg. At the outset, what causes an iceberg to turn is a change of temperature. If the iceberg starts melting, its equilibrium is challenged and this is what eventually makes it flip. Aside from its thermic conditions, its density and shape play an equally important role in the dynamics of its processes. Although it is unlikely for an iceberg to flip all over in the period of two days, being a mental iceberg implies that Victor's mind is particularly dense, and thus of large proportions, and that a change in temperature within itself is triggering its surface to eventually react to it, making it "turn". In the story time, for the period of two years, the creature alienated from Victor, discovers the wonders of the element of fire.[11] The creature's brief engagement with it could foreshadow precisely this flipping of the mental iceberg as a response to the psychical warming.

The correlation between an iceberg and a mountain can be easily applied in this novel when regarded from a morphological, etymological and psychoanalytical angle. Both elements look alike shape-wise; in fact, of all the different shapes an iceberg can have, the most common one is the so-called "pinnacle", which is synonymous with "high peak". Etymologically speaking, the term "iceberg" dates from as early as the 1690s as 'sea-hill' or even 'island of ice' (1610s).[12] If the term itself was to be fragmented, as if breaking off of a glacier, and phonetics was allowed to have a say in it, its result is very eye-opening for my analysis: 'ice' (or '*I*-s'; that is, a double subject) and 'berg' (which

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[11] The analogy of fire in opposition to ice in *Frankenstein* has been analysed in multiple papers, but there is a possible parallelism between this analogy and the "anteturning" of Victor's mental iceberg.

[12] OED: Online Etymology Dictionary.

translates as 'mountain' in German); otherwise stated, a mountain of two *I*-s, two identities. The former element is of great interest to demonstrate that the rotation of the iceberg in *Frankenstein* is caused by a collision of identities (Victor's '*I*'; and his other '*I*', the creature's) that take place up in the mountains (i.e. in Frankenstein's mind). In Freudian terms, these two identities would correspond to Victor's ego and his repressed unconscious.[13] The relevance of this morphological decomposition stems from Robert Walton's interest in finding out more about the North Pole, the ice (*I-s)*. In a subtle but majestic way, the novel introduces this collision of subjects through Walton's eyes (notice: 'ice', '*I-s'*). Because it was not until WWI that sonars were invented, Walton's only reliable source for sailing safely among the blocks of ice was his sight.

4. APPROACHING THE TURNING POINT THROUGH VICTOR'S EGO

Similarly to the symbolism behind Robert Walton's encounter with the ice as well as the two identities (*I*-s), there are various traces and hints analogous to the actual turn of the mental iceberg; namely, in relation to the bodily status of an iceberg, and the adjectival parallels between Victor and his other self. Because the text is a first-person narration, it is easy to grasp some examples provided directly from the main character's words, which will be useful for the analogy of the Mental Iceberg in Victor Frankenstein. With the deaths of William and Justine by the end of Volume I, the tone of the narrator's voice darkens, leading to an increasing self-loath covered in small seeds of angst and sadness spread throughout his narrative: "Justine *died*; she rested; and I was *alive*. . . . *A*

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[13] There are various Freudian terminologies cousins to the unconscious and its relation with the conscious (or ego) in semantic fields. Due to its haziness in most of his work, not because it lacks precision, but because there is a scarcity in factual exemplification, Victor's creature would be best understood if identified in simple terms as his repressed self or *id*. If Freud was to label the nature of Victor's creature, he would probably call it Victor's *id* for the most part of the novel; except for the second volume, in which the creature, by means of the turn of the (mental) iceberg, plays a more active and dynamic role, as it enters the *preconscious* status so as to get in contact with Victor (the conscious, the *ego*) as soon as it perceives auditory signals from him: "Wandering spirits" (89).

weight of despair and remorse pressed on my heart, which nothing could remove" (81; my emphasis). Opposites about death versus life, or light versus dark, are gradually more and more prominent as the story advances. One possible interpretation for this in Freudian terms is the *ego*'s growing identification with his repressed self (the creature, in the novel) stemming from the subject's mourning and melancholia. Despite his emotional blindness, Victor's conscious feelings are little by little mirroring the Creature's (his most inner feelings). This is only natural given the fact that he spends more time on his own, in deep thought. Both sides of his are targets of what Freud considered: "the frustration from the object [which] occasioned the outbreak of neurosis [due to a feeling of] abandonment" (142). Because feelings are rooted in one's inner mental cavities, it makes sense that it is "the creature" the first one to experience this outcome.

There is a second, perhaps more subtle, identification: "a weight of despair and remorse", which could be compared to Victor's words by the end of this volume: "they weighed on me with *a mountain's weight*" (135; my emphasis). Considering the mountain as Victor's Mental Iceberg, what separates these two types of weights Victor mentions is its non-physical (the former) and physical (the latter) manifestations. This suggests Freud's notions on the human capacity to perceive emotions, and how this sometimes leads to misconstruction. In this case, Victor's distorted perception of what is physical and what is not becomes more and more obvious with the final discovery of the iceberg, particularly during his trip to the valley of Chamounix as will be discussed shortly. This distortion begins to take evidential shape especially during the nights he spends on his own by the lake, deep in thought, in "[his] own miserable reflections" (82), near Belrive. Located in the southern part of the Geneva lake, this first attempt of introspective quest could be regarded as a presage of the ego (located on the tip, the northern area) preparing itself for the turn of the iceberg, and eventually allowing the repressed (or superego) to

show up and arise from the depths of his mental iceberg: "We retired to our house at Belrive. This change was particularly agreeable to me" (82). The lake itself is also key, for he associates the waters of the lake to peacefulness and silence; a place where his repressed self shows no signs of resistance nor does his ego. This is why the element of water in all its states can easily be associated with Victor's mental processes and the communion between his conscious and unconscious, how they interconnect and eventually intermingle. Therefore, it would not be that uncanny for him to find an iceberg (i.e. to find himself with his repressed sides), especially considering that his regression towards darker and colder thoughts increases by the minute as he spends time with his own self. Hence, the darker his thoughts, the colder the temperature and the surface (of the iceberg) on which he's travelling by are in turn. In other words, influenced by his instincts, Victor (his ego) is gradually allowing his preconscious (emerging from the unconscious) to enter the conscious areas of his hypothetical mental iceberg. Unlike the repressed, which remains in the unconscious, the preconscious in Freudian terms is understood as the part in the unconscious that becomes conscious by the creation of the so-called super-ego or else *ego ideal* in the dynamics or kinetics.[14] The unconscious gets in turn a chance to be in closer contact with the ego. Freud's logic behind this is that it is due to a disorder of melancholia or a replacement by the object. This process or alteration is the case of the latter, which is mirrored in the turning of the Mental Iceberg with the emergence of the creature or object (which Freud designates "object-cathexes") and eventually replacement of the narrative. This results in the creature's perpetual ontological struggle of seeing itself as an object trapped in Victor's conscious once the creature is in the power of narrating its own story within Victor's.

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[14] Even though Freud uses "dynamics" to refer to these mental motions, the term "kinetics" potentially adds more nuances to the idea of movement. Dynamics do not always imply movement per se.

Using the same pattern in Sigmund Freud's second diagram,[15] notice an analogy between the turning of the iceberg and the transformation produced in and by the ego out of replacement and identification with the creature:[16]

Figure 4.

This three-set graphic of the turning of the iceberg in Victor's mind illustrates the roles of his ego and his id as narrative entities in the novel. Both the sea line and Victor's creature (preconscious) are marked in blue, whereas the tip of the iceberg is marked in green. I illustrate the analogy between the turning of the iceberg and the transformation produced in and by the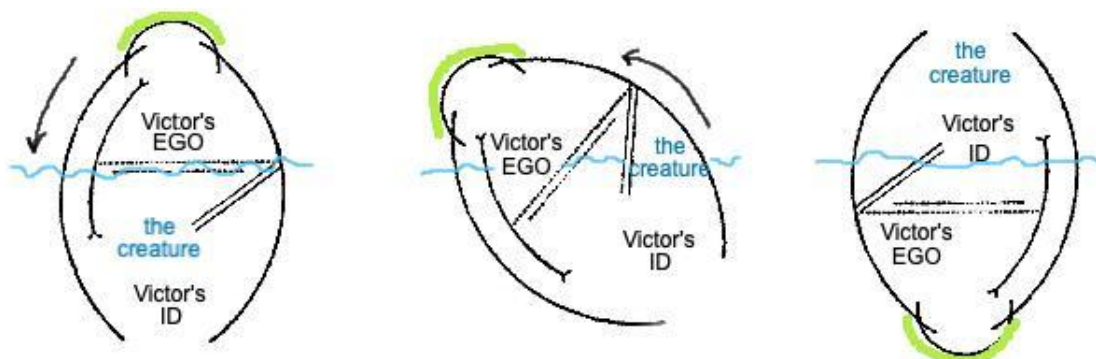 ego out of replacement and identification with the creature. This alteration is parallelly mirrored in Victor's creation of his creature (or thus super-ego), and in turn it is only expected that his creature will eventually be part of his conscious, by becoming his preconscious (or ideal ego).

As Sigmund Freud pointed out in his preface to *The Ego And The Id*, "a state of consciousness is characteristically very transitory" (14), which means that what is part of the conscious now might vanish a moment later, yet come back again. This idea can be brought into a broader use when analysing Victor's two-day hiking to the Alps (the valley of Chamounix on his first day; the summit of Montanvert, opposite to Mont Blanc, on the second). Because the unconscious can become conscious at any time according to Freud,

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[15] *Ibid.* Figure 2.

[16] Personal elaboration using Freud's most recent drawing of the creation of the preconscious.

the point is to analyse the turn of the iceberg in terms of why and how it occurs, rather than when it occurs precisely. Besides, not even the narrator in question knows when this happens as much as what and how it is affecting him. On a similar note, the almost automatic response of the creature (his unconscious) when noticing, hearing, Victor's voice from afar is a great example of what Freud denominated "the role of verbal ideas that result from 'sense-perceptions'" (*Unconscious* 148).

Notice Victor's use of words before the journey, in which he takes the blame and shame: "*I wandered like an evil spirit*, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond description horrible" (81; my emphasis). And now compare it to the tone used on the second day during his trek: "My heart now swelled with something like joy; I exclaimed – '*Wandering spirits,* if indeed ye wander" (89). After this moment, the prayer-some ambience is abruptly blown out by the creature's sudden presence, to which Victor's next words carry nothing but blame towards his repressed self: "*Devil,* do you dare approach me?" (89; emphasis added). Although these two passages are slightly detached both in narrative and story times, they are very similar in form and content. Victor's association and dissociation with the qualifying adjectives 'wanderer, evil, spirit' reflects once again Freud's "misconstruction" when identifying an object through one's perceptive feelings. There is another Freudian notion to this set of examples in relation to the creature's sudden appearance: without going too much into depth, Freud identified different types of memory depending on the mental processes of the subject and object in question ('Unconscious'). In light of this, he insisted that visual memory is not as complete as the acoustic one, for there is "a predominance of the word-relation, over that of the thing" (147); essentially, it is not so much the object remembered as the agent or source that acoustically introduces us to that object. Taking the creature as an example, the id recognised the ego's voice sooner than the uttered message. Freudian interpretation

understands this acoustic recognition as the ego's allowance for the unconscious to enter the preconscious and eventually get in touch with the conscious. Victor's solo hike around the Chamonix-Mont-Blanc region (Southeastern France) serves as a good example to illustrate this.

5. CORE OF THE ANALYSIS: THE TURNING POINT OF FRANKENSTEIN'S JOURNEY THROUGH HIS MENTAL ICEBERG

After the murders of William and Justine, Victor and his family moved to Belrive (France). This is the starting point for Victor's frequent social distancing in nature, where he retrospectively connects with his mental iceberg through nature and the meeting point for Victor's ego and id. During his recurrent trips, the mental iceberg finds its way to lose balance and relocate itself eventually. It is not until Victor's two-day trek through his mental iceberg that the imbalance of the iceberg begins to develop, along with its implications for his unconscious (the creature) and consequences for both his ego and his id. The constant mentions of the state of the land help forge this allegory between Victor and his (mental) iceberg. As the type of land will suggest, his journey is fulfilled with bodily and mental intersections which by the end of this trip will result in a collapse and imbalance epitomised by Victor's mental iceberg. Freud compares the relation between the ego and the id as "a man on horseback, who has to hold in check the superior strength of the horse" (25). Following this line, Victor's words about the hike already set the possible psychoanalytical tone of his hike: "I performed the first part of my journey on horseback" (84).

His attempt to approach the Andes echoes Victor's desperate need to get to the peak of Mont Blanc.[17] In one of his pensive times around Belrive prior to this hike, Victor

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[17] 'Peak' and 'tip' sound phonetically similar. And taking into account the importance given to sounds and auditory recognition in the second volume of this novel, it is handy to bear this similarity in mind when

is reportedly desirous of encountering the Creature: "I would have made a pilgrimage to the highest peak of the Andes. . . . I wished to see him again" (82). This represents Victor's final and most inner quest to reach the very tip of his mental iceberg and find a meeting point between his conscious and unconscious. Despite the numerous maps that illustrate the geographical movements in the novel, I have elaborated a topographic map that briefly summons the two-day trip Victor gets involved in:[18]
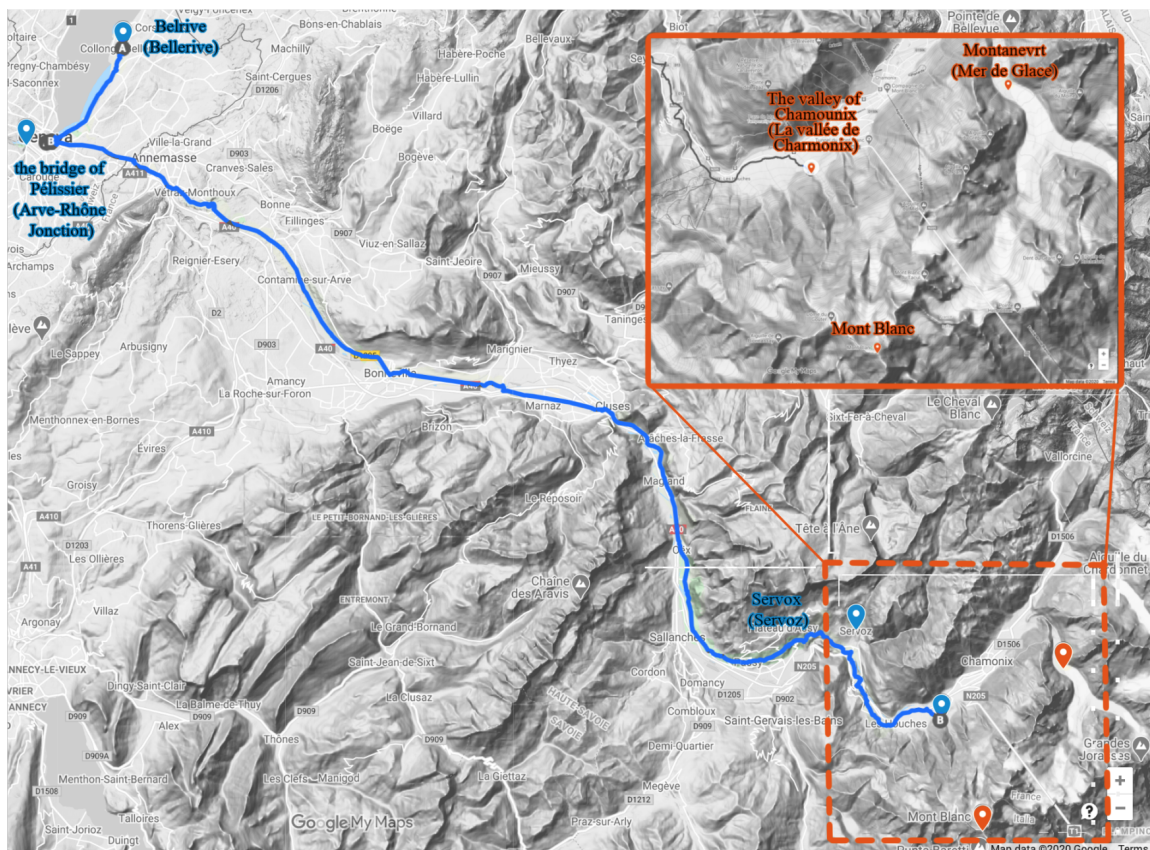

Figure 5.

Victor's departure point of his adventure is Belrive (Southeastern France). Two of the first aspects mentioned from the very beginning of this trip are the conditions of the relief and the climate status: "I performed the first part of my journey on horseback. I afterwards

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interpreting Victor's surroundings. 'Mont Blanc' literally means "white mountain", which is yet another useful allegory to the role of the (mental) iceberg in the novel.

[18] (Figure 5). Personal elaboration and interpretation of Frankenstein's two-day hike using Google Maps to add the guidelines provided by Victor on his account of the two-day trekking that took place in the borders of Southeastern France and West Switzerland. See: www.google.com/maps/d/edit?mid=1Fh4X6GgrxdDUi120Gh04tMqwcebio8c7&usp=sharing

hired a mule, as the more sure-footed and least liable to receive injury on these *rugged roads. The weather was fine*" (84; emphasis added). The irregular surface of a rugged road echoes that of an iceberg. Prior to this, Victor had already depicted the weather as "fine" in a prior trip he took from Switzerland to Geneva to reunite with his family as he received the tragic news of William's death. "the sky was serene" (64). The words "calm", "fine", or "serene" are supplementary to describe the environs of an iceberg as well. In line with this, both surface and climate are features typical of an iceberg.

From Belrive (Southeastern France), Victor descends down to the bridge of Pélissier, crossing the confluence (nowadays named 'Jonction') between the rivers Rhône and Arve. "The weight upon my spirit was sensibly lightened as I plunged yet *deeper* in *the ravine of Arve. The immense mountains* and *precipices* that overhung me on every side – the sound of the river raging among *the rocks* and *the dashing of the waterfalls around*, spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence" (84-85; emphasis added). Arve is a river parallel to the Rhône river, which reflects the duality Victor is about to confront. In addition, a 'ravine' is a deep narrow valley. This notion of depth, as will be seen later on, is equally prominent during his second and last day of the hike and can be measured in the grandeur of the mountains Mont Blanc and Montanvert that will environ Victor. Along this sense of depth, the word 'deeper' echoes that of the iceberg turning, i.e. Victor going downwards, at least the surface of the relief. Furthermore, the surface is literally like a façade at the upper part, at the top. Otherwise put, the surface (or tip of the iceberg) marks a part of Victor's self (the narrator's, the conscious) in an upper position, which immediately implies the existence of another part of his (the creature) that might be under the former. Waterfalls seen as a rather rough, violent, character are Gothic aspects that Victor's ego had previously identified in and labeled to his creature or *id*-entity. In a more literal sense of the word, waterfalls are waters that fall. Following this thought, because

the mountains and precipices are seen on every side there is a duality and possibility of both entities being at the top of the iceberg (i.e. both being the conscious voice). As Victor takes the course of this confluence, an inevitable duality starts shaping as he takes part in this inner journey or quest. Once the bridge of Pélissier is passed, the ascension to the valley of Chimanoux begins. As expected from a high-mountain landscape as well as from an iceberg, "the high and snowy mountains were its [the valley's] immediate boundaries. . . Immense glaciers approached the road; I heard the rumbling thunder of *the falling avalanche*" (85; emphasis added). In the following passage, the features of the landscape described demonstrate the possible close relation existing between the high mountains and an iceberg:

> I passed the bridge of Pélissier, where the ravine, which the river forms, opened before me, and *I began to ascend the mountain* that overhangs it. Soon after I entered the valley of Chamounix. *This valley is more wonderful and sublime*, but *not so beautiful and picturesque*, as that of Servox, through which I had just passed. *The high and snowy mountains were its immediate boundaries*; but I saw *no more ruined castles* and fertile fields. *Immense glaciers* approached the road; I heard *the rumbling thunder* of *the falling avalanche* and marked the smoke of its passage. Mont Blanc, the supreme and magnificent Mont Blanc, raised itself from the surrounding 'aiguilles', and its tremendous 'dôme' overlooked the valley. (85; emphasis added)

As instanced earlier, the ascending of the mountain can be compared to the flipping of an iceberg. As the iceberg turns, Victor reaches its tip. The reason why he finds its surroundings opposed to the sublime is precisely because he is getting closer to the unconscious. At the beginning of his journey, Victor had already been at odds with his split self. In fact, throughout the novel there are various instances of duality which reinforce this inner conflict. The height of the white mountains and its boundaries shows the special attention Victor gives to the surface and its constraints, just like an iceberg

whose characteristics are based on its surficial limitations. "I saw no more ruined castles and fertile fields" showcases Victor's approach to his repressed self; no longer seeing more ruined castles (i.e. Franken*stein*-less)[19] can be interpreted as Victor's detachment from his self and in route to face his duality.

Because he is among glaciers and white mountains, it is word sensical to find an iceberg in such surroundings, especially given the relevance to word and sense perceptions in Freudian terms when analysing the mental processes of the conscious aiming to communicate with the unconscious. Victor's view of the glaciers enhances his will to reach one of its extremes. The tip, which has been turned and what was at the bottom is now on top, acts as the main turning point per se of the change of roles between Victor and his creature. Lastly, "the falling avalanche" is very significant due to its semantic similarities with a moving iceberg. Avalanches are known to be caused by movement, by an iceberg turning in this case. In fact, the cracking of an iceberg is similar to that of an avalanche or "rumbling thunder".

Victor continues reporting his trip: "I spent the following day *roaming* through the *valley*" (87; my emphasis). As characterised by the role of the unconscious in the mind, the verb "roam" usually implies a set of irregular motions in wide or unclear-cut areas. Icebergs are also known to be blocks of ice that float aimlessly in open waters. The bodily limitations and exhaustions may come from the creature's attempts to get to Victor: "motility is possible, [even] when muscular activity is prevented" (Freud, *Unconscious* 127). That being the case, in terms of form, the creature is indeed hidden or embedded in Victor's mind even during his three-day journey: on day one, Victor is the

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[19] The etymological aspect behind Victor's surname is relevant due to its close relationship with the overall topographicality in the novel. Given its origins in German, the word "Frankenstein" (Franken stein) can translate into: "Franconian mountain", or more accurately, "free stone" or "rocky peaks" (OED). This is why I have emphasised the word "stein" and added "-less" to it so as to reinforce Victor's detachment from the outer world, the stones surrounding him, and the approach to his most repressed self.

one doing the walking; on day two, Victor spends the day wandering around, so the creature may be the one doing the walking; and finally on day three, it starts with Victor's climbing to the peak of the mountain (or tip of the iceberg) but ends with the creature's taking the lead and making Victor follow him up to the hut in the rock opposed to the one Victor had previously climbed. This is very significant because it foreshadows Victor's encounter with his id at the tip of the turned iceberg and will eventually give rise to the creature's control over Victor's ego after the last day of the hike. Along with the non-dynamic movements during this short period of physical rest, the emphasis given to the land condition that surrounds him contributes to identifying Victor's hike as a trip essentially occurring in Victor's mind: "I stood beside the sources of the Arveiron, which take their rise in a glacier. . . The abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me; the icy wall of the glacier overhung me" (87). Despite his active rest by the Chamonix valley, his physical exhaustion holds seeds to assume that Victor is experiencing a mental fatigue resulting from his daily routes (or mental processes) within his iceberg, possibly translated as Victor's inner quest to find a reconciliation between his conscious and unconscious. Notice Victor's conclusive words the previous day: "exhaustion succeeded to the extreme fatigue both of body and of mind which I had endured" (85). Another instance which matches the characteristics applied to the previous day: "I retired to rest at night . . . *the grand shapes* which I had contemplated during the day [were] congregated round me; *the unstained snowy mountain-top*, the glittering pinnacle" (87; emphasis added). The only time that Victor also describes shapes as 'huge' is when referring to the creature's physique.

The final day of the hike begins with Victor's ascending the summit of Montanvert,[20] in the slopes of Mont Blanc. Before he reaches its peak, Victor describes the climbing as "solitary" and "precipitous" (88), which are also used to describe icebergs. Previous to this day, he had crossed various ravines throughout this trek, but none were of snow yet. This foreshadows a change in the path, and hence a change of mentality. Significantly enough, it is near midday by the time he arrives at the top. The three-day hike, split in two as a consequence of Victor's resting day can be mirrored here with his arriving at the top in the middle of the day and thus foreshadowing the encounter between Victor and the creature: "It was nearly noon when I arrived at the top of the ascent. For some time I sat upon the rock that overlooks the sea of ice" (88). At this point, one may question, "does the id advance to the surface, or does consciousness make its way to them?" (Freud *Ego and the Id* 19). In *Frankenstein*, it works both ways. Even though it is clear that Victor has advanced towards the Creature, it is in response to the word-presentations uttered by Victor that the Creature steps in. This shows the willingness coming from both extremes of Victor's mental iceberg. Once Victor's "wandering spirits, if indeed ye wander" (89) are uttered, there is a connection established with his id through the auditory perceptions allowing the preconscious (the creature) to get in contact with the ego. After all, both extremes were not so far-fetched from one another because as Freud distinguishes "the ego is not sharply separated from the id; its lower portion merges into it" (24).

Victor's attitude towards the turn of the iceberg (or 'ever-moving glacier' as he perceives it) can be appreciated here: "I remembered the effect that the view of the tremendous and *ever-moving glacier* had produced upon my mind when I first saw [the

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[20] For more precision, see the map on page 15. *Ibid*. Montanvert, Glacier Montanvert or simply 'Mer de Glace' is located on the slopes of Mont Blanc.

Montanvert]. It had then filled me with a sublime ecstasy" (87; emphasis added). In a way, Victor feels good, comfortable, about this turn in spite of the vast dimensions of the landscape enveloping him. What he does not know is the implications of this turn, which he will meet on his final day of the trip, when meeting the creature at the tip (bottom, previous to the turn) of the iceberg. Comfortability usually goes hand in hand with familiarity. Therefore, Victor's peace of mind in the face of such majestic dimensions foretells his predisposition (or just human instinct) to getting in touch with his repressed self, that which lies within the sea (or visual, 'see') level: "the sight of the awful and majestic in nature had indeed always the effect of solemnising my mind and causing me to forget the passing cares of life" (87).

As earlier stated, it is only through sense and word-perceptions that the unconscious (the creature or object) can be perceived by the conscious (Victor or subject). Only then can the preconscious become conscious. To use Freud's exact words, "[the subject] passes through the systems Cs and Pcs till it reaches the unconscious cathexes of the ego and of its objects" (*Unconscious* 148). It is through uttered words that "the repressed. . . retreats into the ego" (143). This passage shows Victor's reaction after being perceived and approached by the creature:

> As I said this, I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me . . . He bounded over the crevices *in the ice*, among which I had walked with caution. . . . It was *the wretch* whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror. . . His countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes. . . Rage and hatred had at first deprived me of utterance (89; emphasis added).

From the perspective of Victor's thought processes, it is difficult for him as a subject to associate and recognise the perceived object (his creature) fully. He experiences a paradoxical sentiment; on the one hand, he despises the creature; but on the other, its

surroundings make him be at peace. The former demonstrates Victor's incapacity or "object-cathexis" (Freud, *Unconscious* 143) to reconcile with his libido, his creature. Because affection is perceived but not fully developed, along with the turned iceberg, it is only natural to find a lack of dynamics and thus a resulting imbalance at the endgame of the novel.

Due to the turn of the mental iceberg and Victor's ego-id encounter, the creature's height is notoriously superior to Victor's ego and therefore it comes natural for the creature to take the lead of the narrative now: "Remember, thou hast made me more powerful than thyself; *my height is superior to thine*, my joints more supple" (90; emphasis added). Before the creature proceeds to tell its story to Victor, it asks him to go to the hut upon the mountain which was to be found just on the opposite rock that Victor had previously sat upon. There, the creature takes Victor's role and leads the narration in the following six chapters. However, because the creature's dominance over Victor's ego occurs within his Cs system in Freudian terms, Victor's ego does not fully lose its power. It is through Victor's words, that one learns about the creature's story in the following chapters. This is reflected in the form in which the creature's story is displayed, since it is voiced by Victor alone and therefore embedded and conditioned by Victor's use of words. As a consequence of this imbalance in his mental iceberg, Victor's last breath is inevitably followed by the Creature's, whose existence fades away "in darkness and distance" (205).

6. CONCLUSIVE THOUGHTS: *FRANKENSTEIN* AND THE THEORY OF THE MENTAL ICEBERG

Despite the novel's already psychoanalytical nature, I wanted to contribute more to it by making special emphasis on the spatial and somewhat tangible dynamics between the two entities from a metaphysical basis such as that of Victor's inner (mental) interactions with his id (the Creature). Understanding this novel as an epitome of Victor's

psychical exploration through his mental iceberg and thus its close application to psychoanalytical notions has offered me the chance to dive more thoroughly into the mind of Victor's character.

With the help of morphosemantic and etymological aspects, I have gathered a consistent recopilation of signs in the second section, or turning point, of the novel which prove to be highly allegorical and similar to notions related to an iceberg. I have taken the Victor-Creature peak encounter as the main source for my analysis. From this turning point onwards, the story goes downhill for both entities colliding in a major imbalance. This imbalance or clash between the two characters holds strong psychoanalytical notions related to the Freudian mental iceberg. The recurrent mentions of the physical topography throughout Victor's solo trip characterised by its subliminal heights, irregular surface and cold climate are also terms related to icebergs. This similar physicality finds common ground with the mental processes occurring in the human psyche or mental iceberg as described by Freud. The scenery constitutes a fundamental ingredient for the attribution of psychicality and what Freud denominated "re-territorilazation of mind" to Victor's trip or inner quest. The inevitable turn of the iceberg makes the imbalance between Victor and the Creature also ineluctable.

Victor's solo hike is in deep sync with the dynamics occurring in a mental iceberg in terms of physical topography. Mapping Victor's solo hike seemed appropriate given the continuous mentions of both bodily and mental intersections and interruptions. In view of the final collapse or imbalance in Victor's psyche, with the Victor-Creature (ego-id) meeting, I elaborated a three-set graphic patterned with Freud's 1932 iceberg-like diagram of the human psyche which serves as prototypal analogy for this turning of the (mental) iceberg.

Given the importance of word-perceptions in Freudian notions when studying the inner works of the psyche my analysis has relied on the idiosyncratic use of words in the novel. It is only when Victor, the ego, breaks the ice by producing a speech that the creature, the id, approaches him. Only then is the id perceived by the ego, and only then does the narrative turn into a change of roles. This confirms Freud's emphasis towards the strong prevalence of the acoustic memory.

This dissertation invites the reader to consider the many psychoanalytical reads *Frankenstein* may offer, further tightening the links between Shelley's masterpiece and Freud's seminal theories. There is always more to uncover, compare and explore than just the tip of the iceberg.

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