Albert Sánchez Piñol’s debut novel, *La pell freda* (2002) narrates in Conradian fashion an unnamed Irishman's voyage to one of the "many blank spaces on the earth". More specifically, the narrator, a nationalist revolutionary involved in the Irish War for Independence (1919-1921), travels to an isolated, unmarked island near the Antarctic circle in order to fulfill the role of atmospheric scientist and carry out various experiments during the space of one calendar year. In a move that takes Sánchez Piñol definitively away from Conrad, a horde of cold-skinned, blue-blooded monsters that live underwater attack the island’s two human inhabitants each night.

This paper asserts that *La pell freda* (Cold Skin) reveals the neighbor to be a highly ambivalent concept, at once containing the seeds of both friendship and enmity. Namely, friendship seemingly produces enmity and vice versa because neighborliness, rather than being a fixed situation, is a pendular state that will perceive the stranger as either antagonistic or benevolent depending on the contingency of circumstance. Sánchez Piñol’s depiction of the Manichean origins of the neighbor has the additional effect of exposing another antithetical fault line under a great deal of tectonic stress: the human/animal divide.

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