Chapter 2

Positioning “Home” away from “Home”: The Representation of the Subject

In the introduction, I have offered a general picture of what I would like to discuss in my thesis. In this chapter, my main target is to examine Gulliver as a traveling subject and some of his unique traveling experiences in *Gulliver’s Travels*. Through these unfamiliar experiences, Gulliver’s subjectivity is constructed by a series of encounters with the strangers. Moreover, Gulliver’s subjectivity is encapsulated by some action in his travels, such as urinating in the island of Lilliput. Since Gulliver’s subjectivity features prominently to foreground the issue of representation, I will apply Kristeva’s idea of “semiotic chora” to discuss the problem of the traveling subject. Throughout the four travels, Gulliver is portrayed as a sight-seer whose subjectivity is generated and rejected by what he has perceived in exotic places. Surrounded by strangers, Gulliver is distanced from his geographical homeland. However, the place of home has taken on a romantic idea, since Gulliver creates an imaginary homeland in his travels. The idea of an imaginary homeland may further raise some basic questions: What is travel? What type of traveler is Gulliver? Where is Gulliver’s “mother” country? Moreover, a sense of displacement also presupposes a space between home and exotic places. *Gulliver’s Travels* testifies that Gulliver is in the process of positing, separating, and identifying. Thus, the representation produced by Gulliver’s positing/separating/identifying not only

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11 In my opinion, the representation of the body is closely related to Gulliver’s subject formation. In the fourth chapter, I will use the example of the Yahoos to address the function of the body because the traveling subject eventually realizes that he is essentially a traveling abject.

12 In “The Semiotic and the Symbolic,” Kristeva argues that “the mother’s body is therefore what mediates the symbolic law organizing social relations and becomes the ordering principle of the semiotic chora, which is on the path of destruction, aggressivity, and death” (27-8).
configures a possible traveling itinerary, but also offers a new way to interpret the problematic position of the subject.

Before investigating the representation of Gulliver’s subjectivity, I would like to discuss the idea of home and the dynamism of travel. In “The Economy of Travel,” Georges Van Den Abbeele pits home against abroad by positing that “the voyage [. . .] always takes us somewhere” (xxx). To Abbeele, a voyage should at least include two pre-requisites. First, a traveler is required to engage himself with “somewhere.” It is not a place where the traveler cannot reach. Moreover, these places should provide “not-too-familiar” scenes for the traveler. At a certain moment, the traveler is conscious of some fundamental differences between the places he visits and his homeland. More than one authentic homeland might exist simultaneously. The authentic homeland in *Gulliver’s Travels* is reinforced by Gulliver’s reflections in his voyages, for the voyages provide a space for the traveling subject to examine the idea of the authentic homeland. Beyond the boundary of the country the concept of home generates a figurative power. This figurative power is represented by Gulliver’s observing the strange places he visits and his speaking with the strangers. Gulliver’s four voyages to the remote places are rich in their figurative power, because the outbound voyages offer readers an opportunity to recognize this figurative power and its impact on Gulliver’s subject.

Swift is an enthusiastic lover of metaphors and he creates Gulliver to enact the idea of home and the representation of the traveling subject. However, the problem is that the metaphor of travel may only be fulfilled by the strangers or “not-too-familiar” sight-seeing. The metaphor of the voyage addresses the following two points: first,

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13 Here, “sight-seeing” is not used in the touristic sense. For example, in *The Tourist*, Dean MacCannell mentions three elements of sightseeing: the tourist, the sight, and the marker (a marker is a piece of information about the sight). The author takes San Francisco as a powerful example:
the metaphor suggests a distance that a traveler has to cover. Second, the voyage, as a quest, gives the traveler an opportunity to investigate the relation between the traveling subject and the strangers he encounters.

Abbeele thinks that “a rigorous analysis of travel is a fundamental impossibility” (xxx). Yet, it is not sufficient to address the dynamic part of travel, a focus on the analysis of Gulliver’s subjectivity. As clearly shown by *Gulliver’s Travels*, the travel narrative is embodied in the constant movements from “home” to abroad and reoriented by the opposite direction. With this understanding in mind, the structure of the metaphor is adopted to describe this repetitiveness. Moreover, a voyage also assumes a sense of displacement and it is not a fixed place where one should expect to find. This “displacement” also implies that the structure of travel is a movement constructed between the traveler and strangers. Rather than a stasis, the voyage is an effective way not only to contest the meaning of “home,” but also to examine the traveling subject who undergoes various uncanny experiences. There are many questions concerning the subjectivity of the traveler: What motivates Gulliver to undertake a remote voyage full of uncertainties? Why does the concept of home generate the possible sentiment that the traveler might harbor while encountering with others? And how does Gulliver adjust himself to these situations while his subjectivity is under scrutiny? In the following paragraphs, I will analyze both Gulliver’s inducement to travel and Gulliver as a traveling subject accounting what he has perceived.

Why is Gulliver eager to voyage? The reason is quite simple: it is impossible

“sightseers do not, in any empirical sense, see San Francisco. They see Fisherman’s Wharf, a cable car, the Golden Gate Bridge.... As elements in a set called ‘San Francisco,’ each of these items is a symbolic marker” (111). However, my focus is on the traveler’s (not tourist’s) subject-formation and its relationship with the travel *per se.*
for Gulliver to stay at home and satiate his unremitting desire to see the world.  
Since travel is a series of adaptations and resettlements, without stamina, Gulliver could not have survived exotic places. He needs to be physically and mentally prepared. Any surprise in travel could be detrimental for him and undesirable for the readers to accommodate the new situations. At the end of *Gulliver’s Travels*, the protagonist insists that what he has reported is based on his individual experience. The travel account is represented by many movements of the traveling subject and it is sometimes interrupted by intended digressions. The purpose of these digressions is not so much to distract the readers’ attention as to remind them of those undiscovered lands which exist simultaneously with the path the traveler has already trodden. Gulliver says, “I could perhaps like others have astonished thee with strange improbable Tales,” for, “it is easy for us who travel into remote Countries, which are seldom visited by *Englishmen* or other *Europeans*, to form Descriptions of wonderful Animals both at Sea and Land” (283). It seems that Gulliver serves as a mouthpiece not only for his country but also for the entire Europe.

Before investigating Gulliver’s subject in depth, his encounter with Don Pedro is a conspicuous example to discuss the sense of displacement. This specific encounter conveys two important messages: first, Gulliver’s subjectivity remains ambiguous; second, the metaphor of travel is intensified by the goodwill of the captain and the suspicion of his crew. As a traveler, Gulliver encounters others in his voyages and records what he perceives. The encounters themselves play an important role in the constitution of the subject. They include, among others, the moment when Gulliver was tied on the ground by the Lilliputians; the moment when the

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14 After Gulliver returns to his country from the island of Lilliput, he describes his strong desire to travel as follows: “I stayed but two Months with my Wife and Family; for my insatiable Desire of seeing foreign Countries would suffer me to continue no longer” (68).
Brobdingnagian farmers discovered Gulliver in the field; the moment when Gulliver was enticed by the possibility of immortality in the island of Struldbrugs; the moment when Gulliver smelt the strong and disgusting odors of the Yahoos; and the moment when Gulliver enjoyed the courtesy and generosity of Captain Don Pedro on his final voyage home. According to Gulliver, the captain is “a very courteous and generous Person; he entreated me to give some Account of myself […] that I wondered to find such Civilities from a Yahoo” (278). Just as the Houyhnhnms see Gulliver as a “perfect Yahoo,” so Gulliver views the captain as a different Yahoo from other mariners. The banishment from the Houyhnhnm-land puts an end to Gulliver’s traveling career; it also implies a reversal: Gulliver-as-a-Yahoo-like traveler is transformed into Gulliver-as-a-Houyhnhnm-like foreigner in his homeland. In addition, the formation of Gulliver’s subject is not confined to a specific moment or place, though the change of time and space may remind Gulliver of his home country. Hence, the issue of Gulliver’s subjectivity is closely related to his travels where he encounters other strangers.

My discussion of Gulliver’s subjectivity lays emphasis on its dynamic part, for the travel accounts have provided evidence for Gulliver’s transformation. The structure of the metaphor between departure and arrival helps us reexamine Abbeele’s concept of the economy of travel which requires a well-constructed plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end. Abbeele argues:

The economic conception of travel thus implies the attempt to keep travel enclosed within certain limits, that of the closed circle of the home, the oikos […] the economy is precisely that which conceptually stops or puts an end to the voyage by assigning it a beginning and an end in the form of the oikos. (xviii)

In other words, the concept of home may set limitation on the scale of the travel. And
the voyage between home and destination forms an enclosed circle which has already posited home as a privileged point which serves the function of both the beginning and the end. In addition, the circular structure of travel implies that the routes might be a repetitive and even a rigid point-to-point movement. Abbeele further argues that “one has always already left home, since home can only exist as such at the price of its being lost” (xix). Rather than dealing with the ontological meaning of home, I would like to start from the following questions: If the meaning of “οίκος” never exists, how can Gulliver voyage? If the location of home is no longer conceivable, how can Gulliver return to his country?

These two questions assume that travel be reckoned as a metaphor. Abbeele conceives the metaphor as a vigorous way to connect ideas, such as home, traveling, subjectivity, and encountering. And the metaphor also implies a possible relation between the traveling subject and Gulliver’s representation of various sights. For example, in the island of Brobdingnag, the sight of their skins makes itself a particular sign with special meanings. For sight-seeing produces a critical distance and a state of mind to examine the protagonist’s familiar concepts and experiences. To some extent, it historicizes the events, traces the memory, and frames the narrative. In the moment of his encounter with the strangers, Gulliver is arrested by what he has seen and experienced. Thus, the “arresting” part of sight-seeing has built upon the events that Gulliver has participated, upon the memory that Gulliver has acquired, and upon the narrative that Gulliver has dictated. Another example of sight-seeing is in the magic island of Grubbdubdrib. The Governor is so good at necromancy that “he hath Power of calling whom he pleaseth from the Dead, and commanding their Service for twenty-four Hours” (186). After invoking the historical celebrities, such as Alexander the Great, Hannibal, and Caesar, Gulliver says:

I would be tedious to trouble the Reader with relating what vast Numbers
of illustrious Persons were called up, to gratify that insatiable Desire I had to see the World in every Period of Antiquity placed before me. But it is impossible to express the Satisfaction I received in my Mind, after such a Manner as to make it a suitable Entertainment to the Reader. (188)

By cataloguing these historical celebrities in his travelogue, Gulliver has made the event of sight-seeing metaphorical. Gulliver’s unexpected encounter with them also invites his readers to experience this esoteric “sight-seeing.”

Sight-seeing is a way to juxtapose Gulliver’s subjectivity with its representation. In fact, seeing is not the only way to experience something; hearing, smelling, and tasting may reflect, distort, and mock what the eyes have seen. The first contact between the traveling subject and a particular sight is not merely the sight itself, but it delivers the message of cultural specificities. The sight that the traveler catches in the first glimpse may seem strange or familiar. After undertaking a much elaborate scrutiny, Gulliver may realize what the sight represents. The first prominent example is Gulliver’s sight-seeing in the metropolis of Lilliput. Here is a remarkable passage which describes what Gulliver sees after he regains his freedom:

The Garret Windows and Tops of Houses were so crowed with Spectators, that I thought in all my Travels I had not seen a more populous Place. The City is an exact Square, each Side of the Wall being five Hundred Foot long […] The Town is capable of holding five Hundred Thousand Souls. The House are from three to five Stories. The Shops and Markets well provided. (33)

For Gulliver, to see the city of Lilliput is a rare experience, because he can observe a city in a panoramic view. From the square of the city, through two great streets, to myriads of lanes and alleys, Gulliver not only enters a world of miniatures, but also a world of representations. Rather than a detailed examination of the city, a panoramic
survey provides Gulliver with an unusual way to understand the structure of the city and the life of inhabitants at a glance.

Although a panoramic observation displays the discernable section of the city, Gulliver paradoxically is not able to see all the cityscapes. What I suggest here is that Gulliver may only see parts of the cityscape because the view of some buildings in the city may be obstructed or distracted by others. Among these buildings, there are also some places that Gulliver cannot enter. Moreover, before entering a world of representations, Gulliver is required to recognize the sight. The sight that either assimilates or threatens Gulliver’s sense of subject is a firsthand practice of representation previously orchestrated by the cultural specificities. The significant part of this relationship is that it translates, penetrates, and proliferates without limits. The cultural specificities have established a reservoir of images for Gulliver to apply when he sees the “familiar but not quite” scenes in exotic places. When encountering the locals, Gulliver is motivated to contrast what comes into his eyes in foreign countries with what he has seen in his homeland. In addition, a possible assimilation and/or confrontation effected between Gulliver’s subjectivity and the sense of otherness will bring out the process of signification.

We may further argue that this relationship is comprised of the signified and the signifier. The signified is frequently represented by an objective fact, such as the landscape of the city. The signifier, on the other hand, is shown by what traveler reacts to the objective fact. The most salient example is the fire scene in the imperial palace of Lilliput. Gulliver suddenly came up with the idea of putting out the fire with what he had drunk in the evening before: “I had the Evening before drank plentifully of a most delicious Wine, called Glimigrim […] which is very diuretick. By the luckiest Chance in the World, I had not discharged myself of any Part of it” (43). The idea that urine might be an expedient solution to the flames suggests that Gulliver’s behavior is
not necessarily inspired by the cultural specificities he has held. It is quite reasonable to infer that Gulliver is a man familiar with urgent situations, for he has encountered many life-and-death moments at sea. Nevertheless, the decision to urinate at this moment may bespeak another perspective. To urinate is far from a good idea to grapple with this situation; it is the function of the unknown part of Gulliver’s subjectivity. Gulliver’s unconscious may account for using urine because the behavior itself is beyond the control that cultural specificities dictate.

But how does Gulliver’s subjectivity work? Does Gulliver’s unconscious form through representing? Does it function as a closed or open space? Or is it a proper place of fashioning his subjectivity? Here are three points to consider. First, Gulliver is capable of saving the palace because of the size of his body and its tremendous capacity. The size of his body enables him to examine the panorama of the fire scene, which in turn offers the traveling subject a broad and open view. In addition, the objects framed in this panorama are represented by three different aspects: the palace, the Lilliputians, and the urine. The palace embodies a secluded space; the Lilliputians witness Gulliver’s gigantic task of rescuing the royal palace; and the urine suggests a totally contingent eruption. However, the unexpected emission from Gulliver’s huge body has a tremendous physical and psychological impact upon the Lilliputians. The most important point in this scene is that the urine is not only a kind of cultural specificities but also denounced by the Lilliputians as a filthy and even offensive thing. Unlike water, urine has conflicted with the defense mechanism\textsuperscript{15} of the

\textsuperscript{15} Here, the defense mechanism is a specific term to describe the psychological condition of the Lilliputians. And it helps the natives to cope with the reality and maintain their self-image. Moreover, the defense mechanism of the Lilliputians is constructed on the basis of the integrity of the palace. However, Gulliver’s urine has subverted this integrity. Readers should remember that the palace belongs to the Empress and thereby it is a private space. For the Lilliputians, the closed space of the city presupposes a sense of exclusiveness that Gulliver’s presence destabilizes. Moreover, this close-up of Gulliver’s urinating scene offers readers a chance to experience and side themselves with either Gulliver or the Lilliputians.
Lilliputians. The defense mechanism will protect the Lilliputians from knowing the objective fact made by Gulliver’s urine. Shocked by the situation, the Lilliputians think that the rescue effort has become humiliating and insulting. Their social norm is challenged by this tremendously undesirable act which further highlights the fact that Gulliver is a stranger.

Second, Gulliver’s urine indicates a subtle relationship between his biological body and the undesirable element it gets rid of. In other words, the urine, originated from Gulliver’s body, is also something separate from his body. As a result, the biological body is given a signifying position which both rejects the control of cultural specificities and opens up a door for semiotic interpretation. This phenomenon can be associated with Kristeva’s idea of the semiotic chora:

The chora is not yet a position that represents something for someone (i.e., it is not a sign); nor is it a position that represents someone for another position (i.e., it is not yet a signifier either); it is, however, generated in order to attain to this signifying position (Kristeva 1984, 26).

Moreover, the signifying position is established upon and preconditioned by almost reflective behavior of urinating. Gulliver’s intuitive behavior is not only a way to assimilate the locals but its consequence also reveals the ambiguity of Gulliver’s incentive. The following passage suggests the term “drive” which may partly explain Gulliver’s act of urinating. Kristeva remarks:

Drives involve pre-Oedipal semiotic functions and energy discharges that connect and orient the body to the mother. We must emphasize that “drives” are always already ambiguous, simultaneously assimilating and destructive; this dualism […] makes the semiotized body a place of permanent scission. (Kristeva 1984, 27)

The urine that Gulliver discharges is a particular “drive” that Gulliver needs to set free.
It offers a chance for readers to combine Gulliver’s body with the representation of his motherland. The urine is a powerful act that serves the symbolic function of exposing the constraints of social structures in Lilliput. Moreover, it also makes “the semiotized body a place of permanent scission,” because the urine facilitates and at the same time problematizes Gulliver’s own representation of the Lilliputians. Thus, Gulliver’s urine as a separate object dominates the signifying process of Gulliver’s representation of the first voyage.

Gulliver’s making water is explicitly represented and it is partially justifiable to say that this undesirable release is just a natural response of the body. Moreover, what is produced, suppressed, and negated in the process of signification will emerge as a determining factor in Gulliver’s subject formation because the signifying process is itself an abiding confrontation between the cultural specificities in his homeland and the sense of otherness in exotic places. For readers may realize that what is represented through Gulliver’s behavior is a set of “psychosomatic modality,” which is discussed by Kristeva as follows:

Although we recognize the vital role played by the processes of displacement and condensation in the organization of semiotic, we must also add to these processes the relations that connect the zones of the fragmented body to each other and also to “external” “objects and “subjects” […] this type of relation makes it possible to specify the semiotic as a psychosomatic modality of the signifying process; in other words, not a symbolic modality but one articulating a continuum.

(Kristeva 1984, 28)

The totality of Gulliver’s body is shattered and fragmented by his urination; the organization of the semiotic may operate in Gulliver’s fragmented body. More importantly, what is suppressed is re-presented by Gulliver’s fragmented body; the
totality of body is destroyed by Gulliver’s inadvertent act of urinating. Then how can the fragmented body be represented? Does Gulliver’s subjectivity provide a clue or a trace for readers to understand and recognize that his body is an unfinished project because it is still in the process of signifying? Is it merely a gesture of exaggeration? Or does Gulliver think that he is assimilated by the natives? Through this specific incident, the urine is regarded as a convenient object to present the physical body. The presence of the urine in the fire scene is represented by Gulliver’s fragmented body; the act of urinating is perceived as an unusual behavior according to the social norms of the Lilliputians. In this sense, Gulliver as a European subject is ridiculed by the Lilliputians.

Third, in my opinion urinating is an effective way for Gulliver to claim his subjectivity. For the corporeal enactment indicates that Gulliver’s urinating scene offers the first evidence in his voyages that his subjectivity is under threat.16 The first reason is based on the fact that Gulliver is a sight-seer who recognizes his existence by perceiving and representing the sensible objects in strange places.17 I have

16 Throughout Gulliver’s Travels, there are three pieces of evidence to prove that Gulliver’s subject formation is under threat. The first conspicuous example is Gulliver’s urinating in Lilliput and the emission of the body offers a different perspective to examine the traveling subject. Furthermore, Gulliver as a speaking subject is challenged by the project of the grand academy of Lagado in his third voyage and the presence of the Yahoos in the last voyage. However, the most extreme example happens in the realization of the strangeness through encountering the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms. Thus, the representation of the subject/object/abject is what I would like to discuss in my thesis, respectively.

17 In the eighteenth century, philosophers such as George Berkeley made the following striking claim about the relationship between the perception of the subject and the object in the external world: “it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind; but it doth not shew that you can conceive it possible, the objects of your thought may exist without the mind: to make out this, it is necessary that you conceive them existing unconceived or unthought of, which is a manifest repugnancy. When we do our utmost to conceive the existence of external bodies, we are all the while only contemplating our own ideas” (111).
mentioned that the panorama displays an open space to include everything happening in the fire scene. In seeing and urinating, Gulliver is both a sight-seer and a sight. In other words, Gulliver is more than a sight-seer, because he not only witnesses the incident, but also performs a gigantic show in front of the Lilliputians. For readers, Gulliver may or may not have made a mistake, because his extraordinary act puts out the fire. Gulliver thus describes the origin of the urine and his knack to apply it to the fire scene:

The Heat I had contracted by coming very near the Flames, and by my Labouring to quench them, made the Wine begin to operate by Urine; which I voided in such a Quantity, and applied so well to the proper Places, that in three Minutes the Fire was wholly extinguished […] (43).

The heat of the flame has facilitated the making of urine in Gulliver’s body. Moreover, by emphasizing the quantity of the urine, the traveling subject raises the fundamental distinction between Gulliver and the Lilliputians: the size of the body. Because of Gulliver’s gargantuan body, he is able to produce much more urine than the Lilliputians. Nevertheless, it is not Gulliver’s body size that matters, but the act of urinating connects his body with the city of the natives.

Gulliver’s unusual act undermines the system of law in Lilliput. Thus, the second possible reason is that Gulliver’s body may challenge the law of the Lilliputians. The urine is an object that the natives immediately observe. Gulliver’s urinating has not only irritated the Empress, but also violated the law of Lilliput. Why does Gulliver’s manner offend her? What does the law represent? After Gulliver releases the gush and performs this “Piece of Service,” the Empress and her confidants regard this as an abominable behavior: “by the fundamental Laws of the Realm, it is Capital in any Person, of what Quality soever, to make water within the precincts of the Palace” (43). The law implies that it is a world of representation to
which both Gulliver and the Empress fall victims.\textsuperscript{18} Thus, this law helps readers understand Gulliver’s later experiences in Lilliput. More importantly, Gulliver’s offensive act and the image of Gulliver’s fragmented body also open a new perspective for interpreting the whole incident.\textsuperscript{19} However, Kristeva’s idea of “the Symbolic order” might complicate the interpretation of this act of urinating. According to Kristeva, the order of Law is constructed by the paternal society. Therefore, in the “Introduction” to Reading Kristeva Kelly Oliver makes the following statement:

The Symbolic order is not just the order of Law. Rather, for Kristeva, it is also the order of resistance to Law. […] for Kristeva the operation of the semiotic within signification opens up the possibility of explaining cultural change. The operation of the semiotic within signification continually proliferates cultural possibilities. (10)

Hence, Gulliver’s urinating is condemned within the domain of the Symbolic

\textsuperscript{18} Although I suggest Gulliver’s Travels is fraught with representations, readers need to tell Gulliver’s case from the Empress. Gulliver is influenced by the cultural specificities of his homeland while the Empress is represented by the cultural specificities in Lilliput.

\textsuperscript{19} Gulliver’s urine has extinguished the fire but violated the law; hence, it is quite reasonable to associate Gulliver’s body with the law. Throughout Gulliver’s Travels, the premise that the body is fundamentally detestable will be further strengthened by the description of the skin in the island of Brobdingnag. The idea of law and order only appears when Gulliver examines his body through encountering with others. While examining himself from the body of the other, Gulliver recognizes the presence of otherness. This presence of otherness may contribute to his psychical transformation. Thus, the psychosomatic description pushes to the borders of the narrative, because not only Gulliver’s body but also his psyche is encountered and represented by the natives. The psychosomatic feature of Gulliver’s urinating offers an effective way to see another dimension of Gulliver’s subject formation. It is not only related to a series of positing/separating/identifying, but also generates a signifying practice that may disrupt the unity of the subject. In the last voyage, Gulliver’s disdain for the Yahoos both delivers this premise the last blow and reorients the issue into another broader direction: Is the subject related to the other because the other has already been within the subject?
order; however, it also calls Gulliver’s subjectivity into question. The protagonist’s outrageous act oscillates between the transgression and the Law, the semiotic and the symbolic. As a result, Gulliver’s condemnable act is due to a specific function of his subject formation. Following the same vein, Oliver has this to say about Kristeva’s idea of subjectivity:

For her, subjectivity is a process that begins with the maternal body before the mirror stage. It is a process that has its beginnings in the maternal function rather than the paternal function. The maternal body is a primary model of the subject-in-process. (13)

Kristeva’s theory of the subject operates within the maternal body prior to Freud’s oedipal situation and Lacan’s mirror stage. Moreover, the Law can be interpreted as the paternal prohibition; through psychoanalysis. And according to Kristeva’s idea, the maternal function prefigures these limitations and hints at the possibility of difference within Gulliver’s subjectivity. In other words, the maternal body has existed inside Gulliver’s subjectivity; the possible way to discover the maternal body is to encounter disturbing others. At first glance, Gulliver’s urinating act serves as a singular act of the biological function. However, a closer scrutiny reveals that this act is positioned on the border of subjectivity and suggests a model of subject-in-process. The idea of subject-in-process suggests that Gulliver’s subject is under scrutiny, and through encountering and representing the strangers in exotic lands readers may realize that Gulliver’s subject is not fixed and stable.

On the one hand, the order of the Law may collapse Swift’s representation of Gulliver. This unwelcome act of urinating is reinforced by Gulliver’s role as a

20 In his discussion of “the Mirror Stage,” Lacan describes it as “an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image—whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term imago” (2).
traveling subject. Travel enables Gulliver to experience Kristeva’s idea of maternal body. However, it is through seeing and urinating that this paternal function is identified.\(^{21}\) On the other hand, Gulliver’s transgression of the law also examines the idea of home and its relationship with traveling. A sense of strangeness, displacement, and negation may occur when Gulliver is excluded by the others whose presence might threat and undermine his subjectivity. The urination has demeagerized Gulliver’s image so much that he becomes both a traitor and an outlaw. However, it is difficult to imagine Gulliver as either of them. Gulliver is not a traitor, because that accusation is often associated with the idea of a fixed place, such as Gulliver’s homeland; nor is he an outlaw, because the act of urination is ambiguously represented due to the fact that it helps the Lilliputians extinguish the fire in the palace.

The scatological scene thereby touches upon the hidden part of Gulliver’s subjectivity. The indictment from the Lilliputians indicates that the act of urination in the palace has already been prohibited by the order of Law. Thus, this significant scene highlights two things. First, as a stranger, Gulliver experiences exposing part of his body to the others.\(^{22}\) Moreover, the act of urinating suggests that Gulliver’s subjectivity is problematic and is the author’s signifying practice to represent the Lilliputians. The place where Gulliver urinates is regulated under the paternal function, and the condition of subject-in-process is first examined by the concept of

\(^{21}\) It is not difficult to explain why the Lilliputians want to punish Gulliver’s offensive act by putting out both of his eyes. For Gulliver may see this place before that offensive act; the eyes are the only receptor to obtain any visual data in traveling.

\(^{22}\) He first exposed his body when he was still tied to the ground and had to make water in the very beginning of his stay in Lilliput. Here, the exposure is described in a very subtle way and the focus is on the incident of the fire. In *Gulliver’s Travels*, there are at least three times that Gulliver may have a strong sense of his body in contrast to the people he encounters. The first time is in Lilliput and the second time is in Brobdingnag. The last time of seeing his body is set in contrast to the Yahoos and their all-too-familiar behaviors, which I will discuss in the fourth chapter.
home. Gulliver’s homeland provides a fixed and stable idea to situate his subject while in the palace of Lilliput it is not a proper place for Gulliver to urinate. However, the release itself indicates that urinating is a sign of bringing attention to the body, a subtle way to show that Gulliver’s subjectivity is a work in progress. The idea of Gulliver’s fragmented body thereby challenges his subject. Because Gulliver’s subject is undermined, the cultural specificities he embraces are also challenged. In this sense, the geographical homeland turns out to be an impossible object to identify with because it is essentially out of place.

Therefore, this incident of making water suggests three things: it is in this moment that Gulliver’s body is perceived; it is in this moment that the idea of homeland is called into question; and it is in this moment that Gulliver’s subjectivity is examined. But what exactly makes Gulliver’s subjectivity problematic? The body is the first place to posit the imaginary “home” away from the authentic “home.” The potential mobility of the body produces many different possibilities in travel. Moreover, the urinating act enhances the sense of uncertainty in Gulliver’s travels. This is indeed an improper act in the public. However, it does spawn a sense of being excluded as shown by the indictment of Gulliver as a traitor and outlaw. This marks another turning point in Gulliver’s stay in Lilliput where he was first treated as an intruder and then as a guest.²³ It also suggests that the traveling subject is limited by his knowledge of the world and what he has known about himself. Fortunately, traveling also brings about the possibility of healing, for the presence of strangers provides the traveler with what Kristeva calls “psychoanalytic treatment.”

²³ The relationship between host and guest is a critical issue in the discourse of modern tourism. In Native Tours, Erve Chambers points out that “we need to distinguish here between hospitality as a feature of the relationships between travelers and the communities they visit (the host/guest relationship) and the mediation of a large and pervasive hospitality industry that has emerged in response to modern tourism” (10).
In the “Introduction” to *The Kristeva Reader*, Toril Moi has this to say about Kristeva’s aim of “psychoanalytic treatment”:

Is it really tenable to see the attempt to give the empty “borderline case” what might very well be yet another “false self” as the end of the analysis? Arguing that it may be preferable to leave such patients their moments of emptiness, inauthenticity and absence. […] The modern, unstable and empty subject, she argues, ought not to be fixed and stabilized, but to be turned into a *work in progress*. (Kristeva 1986, 14)

It seems to me that psychoanalysis offers an effective way to interpret Gulliver’s subjectivity. The relationship between the traveling subject and the strangers is similar to the patient-analyst relationship. Traveling to exotic lands calls Gulliver’s subjectivity into question, and it echoes what I have said at the beginning of this chapter: Kristeva’s idea of the “semiotic chora” prefigures a maternal body which renders a signifying practice or network for Gulliver.

Starting from the “maternal body” and “semiotic chora,” Kristeva argues that separation from the maternal body provides the subjectivity with a possibility:

Separation from the mother’s body, the *fort-da* game […] act as a permanent negativity that destroys the image and the isolated object even as it facilitates the articulation of the semiotic network, which will afterwards be necessary in the system of language where it will be more or less integrated as a *signifier*. (Kristeva 1984, 47)

Travel carries many dynamic meanings and implications. Kristeva’s idea of “separation from the mother’s body” offers a trope which sheds light on Gulliver’s leaving his homeland. But why does Gulliver need to travel and see the strangers? In terms of psychoanalysis, what drives the traveling subject to undergo a series of departures and returns?
To answer these questions, Freud’s account of the “fort-da” game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* provides some crucial clues for understanding Gulliver’s situation. For Freud, the “fort-da” addresses a series of repeated acts:24

The good little boy, however, had an occasional disturbing habit of taking any small objects he could get hold of and throwing them away from him into a corner […] this was not a mere interjection but represented the German word “fort” [“gone”]. […] The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. […] What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over […] He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful “da” [“there”]. This, then, was the complete game—disappearance and return. As a rule one only witnessed its first act, which was repeated untiringly as a game in itself, though there is no doubt that the greater pleasure was attached to the second act. (Freud 1961, 14)

The “fort-da” game represents the structure of the travel that Gulliver is driven by the compulsion to repeat. The process of Freudian “repetition compulsion” is what I call the task of healing, because through undergoing a series of voyages and encountering others Gulliver may recognize the essential part of himself. Moreover, Gulliver’s unremitting desire to see the world comes as a result of his compulsion. Gulliver’s perpetual aspiration to travel thereby builds up a different kind of patient-analyst relationship which offers a vigorous interpretation of the travel narrative.25

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24 According to Freud’s observation, a child “was not at all precocious in his intellectual development” and his toy-playing reveals the essential meaning of “fort-da” game. The game itself is the child’s invention of symbolism: the use of an object (reel) to represent another (absent object or mother). This symbolism also coincides with the Houyhnhnms’ expression of “the Thing which was not,” to be discussed in the next chapter.

25 Here, the analysts may be represented by the travel and Gulliver’s encounters with others. The travel narrative and Gulliver’s encounter with others are interconnected, because the Freudian idea of the
This vigorous interpretation of travel literature, characterized by repetitive departures and returns, can also be used to examine Gulliver’s subjectivity. As pointed out earlier, the way narrative functions in *Gulliver’s Travels* is closely related to the Symbolic order and the semiotic chora. In a way, the traveling and writing subject in *Gulliver’s Travels* makes a great effort to help his readers not to fall into the trap of the traditional historical content. But before entering into the materiality of language in the next chapter, I would like to provide some different perspectives on travel narrative.

In “Travel and Translation: Textuality in *Gulliver’s Travels*,” Grant Holly points out one of the characteristics of history: repetition. But he seems to be a little pessimistic about the dynamics of travel, because he argues that what constitutes the narrative in *Gulliver’s Travels* is only “an endless and inescapable textuality.” In his opinion:

> In *Gulliver’s Travels* the narrative gestures towards itself as a signified material in the repeated occurrence of emblems of the text […] the way out of narrative is barred by the proliferation of substitutions, translations, and comparisons which constitute an endless and inescapable textuality. (151)

This “endless and inescapable textuality” suggests a close relationship between the travel narrative and Gulliver’s subjectivity. What Holly means by the historical, social, and cultural dimension of the text somehow echoes Kristeva’s idea of “phenotext” and

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“fort-da” game can be used to interpret Gulliver’s encounters with the strangers and his perception of himself in an uncanny world.

26 In *Language: The Unknown*, Kristeva discusses the laws of linguistic components, including phonetics, grammar, and semantics. In *Gulliver’s Travels*, the problem of naming not only represents the world Gulliver has perceived, but also addresses a signifying practice between the traveling subject and the objects (others).
“genotext” in “the Semiotic and the Symbolic.” Rather than a phenotext, *Gulliver’s Travels* is a genotext. According to Kristeva:

The genotext is thus the only transfer of drive energies that organizes a space in which the subject is not yet a split unity that will become blurred, giving rise to the symbolic. Instead the space it organizes is one in which the subject will be generated as such by a process of facilitations and marks within the constraints of the biological and social structure.

(Kristeva 1984, 86)

The most conspicuous example of the genotext in *Gulliver’s Travels* occurs in the description of the island of Glubbdubdrib. It is clear that by means of magic, a sense of strangeness is represented by these historical figures. Their presence is constructed by “a process of facilitations and marks.” Moreover, the magic here may be the most powerful way to summon these well-known guests and to represent them. These historical figures, conjured up by the magic of the Governor, encounter and answer the questions put forward by the traveling subject. In a sense, these historical figures should be regarded as the “objects” of the Governor’s performance. The genotext enables the contact between Gulliver and these historical figures. For Gulliver and readers, the Governor’s magic provides an alternative way to examine Gulliver’s subjectivity and addresses the dynamics of travel which challenges Holly’s idea of narrative.

In “Travel and Translation,” Holly also takes an adamant position, arguing that “Gulliver can never really voyage because he can never exceed the limits of what he already knows” (148). I do not completely agree with Holly’s argument, for it is unfair to blame Gulliver for the limits of his knowledge and to regard them as the reason why he “can never really voyage.” No one knows everything and the limits of Gulliver’s knowledge may confine Gulliver’s experiences and frustrate his ambitions
to travel to a certain extent. However, it is the drives of “compulsion to repeat” which make Gulliver’s voyages possible and his narrative heterogeneous. With regard to the repetition of the same experiences, Freud has more to say:

This “perpetual recurrence of the same thing” causes us no astonishment when it relates to active behaviour on the part of the person concerned and when we can discern in him an essential character-trait which always remains the same and which is compelled to find expression in a repetition of the same experiences. We are much more impressed by cases where the subject appears to have a passive experience, over which he has no influence, but in which he meets with a repetition of the same fatality. (23-24)

What Freud emphasizes is the “repetition of the same fatality” which marks the experience of Gulliver the traveling subject. Holly’s assertion also contradicts Abbeele’s idea that “one has always already left home.” In Holly’s opinion, Gulliver might really voyage only when he recognizes the limitation of his subjectivity. On the other hand, Abbeele may argue that what is important is not to underscore the relationship between Gulliver’s individual ability and the structure of travel, but to focus on Gulliver as a traveling subject who encounters others in foreign lands. And these encounters may galvanize his subjectivity, but at the same time they problematize its totality. In this sense, besides the idea of the “fort-da” game, the borderline between home and voyage becomes ambiguous in this travel narrative. Through Gulliver’s uncanny experience in the magic island, this borderline may somehow be blurred and what is left is their signifying practice undermining Gulliver’s subjectivity.

Therefore, in order to broaden my discussion of Gulliver’s subjectivity, here are some questions to consider: What kind of traveler is Gulliver? What is the
significance of Gulliver’s voyages and returns? At the first glimpse, Gulliver seems to be a sedentary traveler as defined by Syed Manzurul Islam, because a sedentary traveler may want to seek confirmation through representing others, but in the process of representation he fears to recognize the hidden part of his subject (209). But if it is the case, is Gulliver merely a sedentary traveler? The example would be in the last voyage. Before Gulliver’s returning from the Houyhnhnm-land, *Gulliver’s Travels* with its structure of departure and return resembles ordinary travel accounts in Swift’s times. Nevertheless, Gulliver is far from an ordinary traveler, because the totality of his subjectivity is eventually negated at the very end of his voyage. In *The Ethics of Travel*, Syed Manzurul Islam pits a sedentary traveler against a nomadic one:

The former [sedentary traveler] inhabit a striated space, moving only from point to point, folded in the inside, dragging in their “moved body” along a rigid line, failing to encounter difference, and returning the same […] A “sedentary traveler”, frigid with the morbid fear of encounter, moves in space either to seek confirmation of her/his egocentric self in the mirror of the other, or to capture the other in representation in the paranoiac gesture of othering, thus never becoming-other. (209)

On the contrary, a nomadic traveler “dwell[s] in a smooth space (*Gegend*-region, or *Heterotopia*), letting their ‘moving body’ slide along the supple line, crossing boundaries with speed and experiencing the intensities of encounter, never returning the *same*, and becoming-other” (209).

Islam’s remark cuts both ways. On the one hand, this typical body can only travel from one position to another, to and fro, repeating the same act and representing the world with his eyes and mouth. However, I have shown that the problem of Gulliver’s subjectivity lies in his compulsion to repeat and the heterogeneity of his travel account. On the other hand, the inevitability of this repetitiveness culminates in
Gulliver’s last return, a radically Freudian “da” from the Houyhnhnm-land. For Gulliver’s subjectivity is explicated in terms of the process of the “fort-da” game and in no way does Gulliver’s subjectivity remain unified.

Since I have associated the idea of home with Gulliver’s urinating act, there is another question to be considered: Where might be the home that Gulliver may pursue under the circumstance that the compulsion to repeat is the nature of travel narrative? The most conspicuous example to illustrate why he undergoes so many voyages is in the island of Struldbrugs. Gulliver’s “active” experience in this island bespeaks another facet of his travel: death is a trope to signify fear and it is the antithesis of home. A number of immortal beings live in the island of Struldbrugs and Gulliver not only admires but also imagines what he would do if he were immortal: “[…] what Scheme of Living I should have formed to myself, if it had fallen to my Lot to have been born a Struldbrugg” (201). This remark represents the very moment that Gulliver encounters his inner desire to become estranged and the wish to live among them somehow reflects Freud’s idea of “self-preservative instincts.” For in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud emphasizes:

The hypothesis of self-preservative instincts, such as we attribute to all living beings, stands in a marked opposition to the idea that instinctual life as a whole serves to bring about death. […] They are component instincts whose function it is to assure that the organism shall follow its own path to death, and to ward off any possible ways of returning to inorganic existence other than those which are immanent in the organism itself. (46-47)

Being immortal challenges the essential meaning of travel, because travel poses many threats to the traveling subject and Gulliver strives to preserve his life against these threats. Thus, travel is regarded as a drive to evoke “those which are immanent
in the organism itself.” The repetitiveness reiterates that Gulliver’s subjectivity is not fixed, stable, unified, and secure, but assumes many possibilities and positions both in his travels and in his travel narrative. However, Gulliver’s imagination to be immortal is shattered because he later realizes that these immortals are simply “the Follies and Infirmities of other old Men, but many more which arose from the dreadful Prospect of never dying” (204).

The body of Strulbrugs enables Gulliver not only to realize that the biological part of any organism is the first and foremost confronting area, but also to face the psychosomatic aspect that further engages Gulliver’s subjectivity with the implication of death. Gulliver’s subjectivity is located in the “process” of seeing and expressing; only through writing, reporting, and telling the differences between him and others can Gulliver realize the impossibility of representing them and of seizing the totality of his own subjectivity. Writing the subject may also mean writing the abject, as Kristeva argues: “writing them implies an ability to imagine the abject, that is, to see oneself in its place and to thrust it aside only by means of the displacements of verbal play” (16). In this sense, Gulliver writes about his abjection and tries to find a reason for his continuous displacements.

In Questions of Travel, Caren Kaplan takes another stand by considering the relationship between writing and traveling. She argues that “since ‘dwelling’ is now impossible, the solution is to make a ‘home’ in writing. ‘For a man who no longer has a homeland, writing becomes a place to live’” (119).27 Fashioning a home in writing not only suggests that writing provides the traveling subject with spaces to regain what he has lost in travel, but also presupposes a speaking

27 Here, Kaplan borrows her idea from Adorno. In Minima Moralia: Reflections from a Damaged Life, Adorno argues that modernity has brought both progress and destruction. He is so nostalgic and pessimistic as to declare that any dwelling is impossible because modern individual life is essentially rootless, repetitive, and alienated.
subject. As Kristeva argues:

Writing represents-articulates the signifying process into specific networks or spaces; speech (which may correspond to that writing) restores the diacritical elements necessary for an exchange of meaning between two subjects (temporality, aspect, specification of the protagonists, morpho-semantic identifiers, and so forth). (87)

With writing’s “redemptive” power for the traveler, readers may experience the ambiguity of travel writing which produces interpretative impossibility and semantic uncertainty that I will discuss in next chapter.

Therefore, in this chapter, in order to discuss the representation of the traveling subject, it is necessary for me to position “home” away from “home.” The first “home” is represented by Gulliver’s travel in alien lands; the second one is to describe Gulliver’s departure from his country. The most salient example to investigate the representation of Gulliver’s subject is through his unusual act of urinating in Lilliput. This specific act violates the law of Lilliput, and suggests a problematic nature of Gulliver’s subjectivity. Moreover, a psychoanalytic treatment of Gulliver’s subjectivity is an effective way to render the dynamic part of travel. Thus, by adopting Kristeva’s idea of “the Semiotic and the Symbolic,” readers may have a further understanding toward Gulliver’s urination. And Freud’s idea of “fort-da” game not only helps us to describe Gulliver’s particular drive, but also to address the problem of the repetitiveness of travel.