Chapter 3
Decoding and Encoding What “They” Speak: The Representation of the Object

In the previous chapter, I have discussed the problem of Gulliver’s subjectivity by citing his act of urinating in the island of Lilliput. Moreover, I have borrowed Kristeva’s ideas of the “maternal body” and the “semiotic chora” to describe the unstable nature of Gulliver’s subjectivity. In my opinion, this act of urinating brings about two psychoanalytic threads: the symbolic and the semiotic. In addition to making use of Kristeva’s psychoanalytic theory, I have also applied Freud’s idea of the “fort-da” game to explain the drives that facilitate Gulliver’s travels. In this sense, travel opens up another perspective to associate Gulliver’s subjectivity with Freud’s concept of the “compulsion to repeat.” It is this encompassing compulsion to undergo the “game” that challenges the idea of the authentic home. Starting from the repetitiveness of Gulliver’s various voyages, I try to connect travel with the idea of home and to discuss Gulliver’s representation of his encounters in Lilliput. A heterogeneous interpretation of Gulliver’s Travels is made possible because the presence of the strangers not only examines Gulliver’s subjectivity, but also challenges what he has represented in exotic lands.

Thus, the encounter with the strangers is the first characteristic of Gulliver’s Travels. When Gulliver encounters the others, it is necessary for the traveling subject to cope with two questions: What do they talk about? What do they mean? Therefore, what I want to do in this chapter is to discuss the problem of language in Gulliver’s Travels. Moreover, through decoding and encoding what the strangers speak, Gulliver’s subjectivity is called into question. The representation of the object is effectively carried out through the communication between Gulliver and the strangers. This chapter, then, tries to do two things. On the one hand, I will cite two examples
from “the School of Langado” and the Houyhnhnm-land to illustrate my point, because their language systems may bring different perspectives for discussing language. On the other hand, by adopting Kristeva’s theory of language, I propose that a position of “the speaking subject” is presented by the communication between Gulliver and the strangers. Kristeva states:

Language is the process of communicating a message between at least two speaking subjects, one of whom is the addresser or sender, the other, the addressee or receiver. [...] However, each speaking subject is both the addresser and the addressee of his own message, since he is capable of emitting a message and deciphering it at the same time, and in principle does not emit anything he cannot decipher. In this way, the message intended for the other is, in a sense, first intended for the one who is speaking: whence it follows that to speak is to speak to oneself. (Kristeva 1989, 7-8)

Thus, Gulliver’s transformation as a speaking subject weaves a web of signifying practices which also reassures the idea of subject-in-process. This transformation is represented by Gulliver’s repeated departure and returning. Before entering my discussion of “the speaking subject” in the text, some difficult questions remain to be answered: What is the role of Gulliver as a speaking subject in his travel narrative? How do the possible organizational mode of systems in language, such as phonetics, syntax, and semantics, operate in the signifying practices? What are the constraints of these systems? Considering Gulliver’s representation of the strangers,

28 In Language: The Unknown, Kristeva touches upon the problematic that has been at the center of studying language. She insists that “What is language?” should be replaced by “How was it possible to conceive of language?” and “by posing the problem in this way, we resist looking for a supposed ‘essence’ of language, and we present linguistic practice through the process that accompanied it: the thought it provoked, and the representation that was made of it” (5).
what is the relationship between signifier and signified? Do the traces of speech between two separate subjects bear an indelible mark on the body? Is it possible to create a discourse that suggests a specific sense of strangeness? All these questions require a closer examination of the speaking subject.

In my opinion, discussing the speaking subject within Kristeva’s framework of the semiotic and the symbolic not only helps grasp Gulliver’s heterogeneous nature, but also offers us an opportunity to understand how the dynamic of language effects. So far as the objective relations are concerned, we need to explore the laws or the symbolic of the paternal function. At the very beginning of *Language: The Unknown,* Kristeva addresses what she calls “the materiality of language”:

> While *la langue* is a network of regulated differences on which signification and communication are based, it is far from being a pure ideality. It is realized by and in *concrete matter* and the *objective laws* of its organization. In other words, while we *know* language by means of a complicated conceptual system, the actual body of language manifests a doubly discernible materiality. (18)

The materiality of language takes into consideration not only the differences between two sign systems, but also an exchange or translation that undermines the totality of each system. Moreover, it is the limitation of the signifying practice that catches my attention. This limitation may have to do with the problem of position in the process of enunciation that Kristeva describes in

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29 In his “Introduction” to *Desire in Language,* Leon S. Roudiez clearly states that “the semiotic process relates to the chora, a term meaning ‘receptacle,’ which she [Kristeva] borrowed from Plato … It is also anterior to any space, an economy of primary processes articulated by Freud’s instinctual drives (Triebe) through condensation and displacement, and where social and family structures make their imprint through the mediation of the maternal body.…The symbolic process refers to the establishment of sign and syntax, paternal function, grammatical and social constraints, symbolic law” (7).
“the Semiotic and the Symbolic”: 30

This positionality … is structured as a break in the signifying practice, establishing the identification of the subject and its objects as preconditions of propositionality. We shall call this break, which produces the positing of signification, a thetic phase. All enunciation, whether of a word or of a sentence, is thetic. (Kristeva 1984, 43)

The moment of “thetic” offers an effective way to examine the break between signifier and signified. Hence, in this chapter, in addition to the materiality of language, I will delve into the unstable process of signifying practice which may relate to Gulliver’s split subjectivity. 31 Moreover, the language system of the Houyhnhnm-land offers a good example of the dynamic of language that substantiates Kristeva’s idea of intertextuality and highlights the signification of the “thetic” phase by putting rationalism into question. To facilitate our discussion, we should first take up the issues of the materiality of language and of the representation of naming in the island of Laputa, because it is an island replete with linguistic signs and representations.

In Gulliver’s third voyage, the trip from the flying island of Laputa to the land

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30 Kristeva is dissatisfied with the previous treatment of the speaking subject and criticizes contemporary language theorists, such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Norm Chomsky, Edmund Husserl, John Searle, and J. L. Austin, in her early writings. In “The System and the Speaking Subject,” Kristeva calls her project “semanalysis,” for it “conceives of meaning not as a sign-system but as a signifying process. Within this process one might see the release and subsequent articulation of drives as constrained by the social code yet not reducible to the language system …” (28). Moreover, rather than “semiotics,” the term “semanalysis” implies that this kind of analysis aims at dissolving the sign. To me, the project of “semanalysis” highlights a subject-in-process and a shifting subject position.

31 Despite its widespread psychoanalytic usage, I think “split” is also a convenient term to express a condition of splitting consciousness into conscious and unconscious, to stress the distinction between signified and signifier, and to effect a dialectical opposition between symbolic and semiotic.
of Balnibarbi provides a strong textual illustration to illustrate Kristeva’s theory of language. As a traveling subject, Gulliver’s learning new languages cannot be restricted to the study of words, grammar, and syntax only, because he has to deal with phonetics as well. For example, before Gulliver enters the flying island, he has heard the “sound” made by the Laputians:

At length, one of them called out Sound to the Italian; and therefore I returned an Answer in that Language, hoping at least that the Cadence might be more agreeable to his Ears. Although neither of us understood the other, yet my Meaning was easily known, for the People saw the Distress I was in. (147)

This specific incident focuses on an articulatory and phonetic effect of sound-production. By emphasizing its similarity with the Italian, Gulliver somehow is representing and rationalizing what he has heard. By emphasizing their cadence, he imagines a totality of language system. Moreover, the language tutor in Laputa teaches Gulliver to understand external objects by signs and gives the traveler the names and descriptions of these objects. After a few days of learning their language, Gulliver offers his own interpretation of the word “Laputa,” whose etymology is beyond his grasp, as a starting point to study the local language:

The Word, which I interpret the *Flying or Floating Island*, is in the Original *Laputa*; whereof I could never learn the true Etymology. *Lap* in the old obsolete Language signifieth *High*, and *Untuh a Governor*; from which they say by Corruption was derived *Laputa* from *Lapuntuh*. But I do not approve of this Derivation, which seems to be a little strained. I ventured to offer to the Learned among them a Conjecture of my own, that *Laputa* was quasi *Lap outed*; *Lap* signifying properly the dancing of the Sun Beams in the Sea; and *outed* a Wing. (152)
From this passage we can see that Gulliver’s interpretation has implied that the meaning of a word has already been confined within a historical context. The process of fashioning a meaning might not be so stable and, to Gulliver, the meaning might be multiple, an idea that challenges the unity of the language system. The derivation of “Laputa” offers the possibility of multiple interpretations. By means of the word “Laputa,” Gulliver has introduced two blatant characteristics of language: first, it changes with time and space and is constrained by the social code; and second, the meaning of a word is constructed by a sign system which consists of the signifier and the signified. Since the meaning of the flying island is suffused with variations, its language system may also present this phenomenon.

The study of etymology makes readers further consider the problem of a prehistory of language and echoes what Kristeva calls “linguistic relativity.” In *Language: The Unknown*, she elucidates the role of history in language:

> Considering with prudence the theory of linguistic relativity, anthropology and anthropological linguistics are studying languages and linguistic theory of so-called primitive societies, not to reach in this way the “initial” point of language, but to construct a vast overview of the different modes of representation that have accompanied linguistic practice. (Kristeva 1989, 47)

What Kristeva concerns is the different modes of representation which may help us understand how a traveling subject describes the things he perceives. Moreover, the particular issue of “language as history”\(^\text{32}\) may also help construct a space for

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\(^{32}\) In “Language as History,” Kristeva points out that “the linguistic process subject is keeping in mind the discoveries of the historical period and is interested in shedding some historical or social light on its reflections and general classifications, while keeping close to the specific linguistic material of the concrete language…. [I]n the second direction, linguistic is censoring what the historical study of concrete languages has brought to the knowledge of symbolic operation, and is striving to elaborate a
Gulliver to participate and interpret. Kristeva suggests that there are two directions for linguistics: First, it should keep close to “the specific linguistic material of the concrete language.” And second, it “censors what the historical study of concrete languages has brought to the knowledge of symbolic operation” (Kristeva 1989, 216). Nevertheless, in Laputa, the production of meaning, characterized by their daily communications, is operated through the institute of the language of science. However, by merely focusing on the materiality of language, the Laputians reduce the signifying practice to a mechanical process which is also characterized by the disappearance of a speaking subject.

The mechanism of language has become an object of study because it proposes an enclosure of linguistic representation. As a traveling subject, Gulliver in the flying island not only learns how to communicate with strangers, but also discerns that there are radical differences in their process of generating meaning. In Laputa, the production of meaning is primarily connected with the practical aspect of language. One can take the description of “the school of languages” in the “grand Academy of Lagado” as a further example:

The first Project was to shorten Discourse by cutting Polysyllables into one, and leaving out Verbs and Participles […] The other, was a Scheme for entirely abolishing all Words whatsoever: And this was urged as a great Advantage in Point of Health as well as Brevity. (177)

On the one hand, the specific project of cutting polysyllables into monosyllables and finally eliminating all words has suggested a “great Advantage” to the health of the speaking subject. On the other hand, this brevity is made possible by a biological operation on the organs, like lungs, the tongue, and the mouth, which is contrary to

logical-positivist theory of linguistic structures, more or less abstracted from their signifying materiality” (Kristeva 1989, 216).
Kristeva’s idea that “language is not a biological function […] Language is a function of differentiation and signification, that is to say, it is social and not a biological function…” (Kristeva 1989, 19). The removal of the verbs provides a forceful example to question the subjectivity of the speaking subject, for the operation of the verbs may prefigure the possible movement of the speaking subject. At first glance, this scheme of abolishing all words seems plausible because of its positive effects on the speaking subject. Nevertheless, the total elimination of words is unlikely to achieve because a language is essentially not a product. The linguistic performance is a concern for speaking subject. The disappearance of the speaking subject shifts my discussion to how the process of meanings is produced, how the signifying practice is negated, and how the psychoanalytic treatment works in this manner. I will also examine a particular meaning with a particular subject and reiterates Kristeva’s idea of semanalysis.

Juxtaposing the reduction of polysyllables into monosyllables with a drastic project of the abolition of words, I am eager to swerve the discussion from the materiality of language to the speaking subject. Kristeva’s idea of semanalysis proposes a possible combination of psychoanalysis and language. In other words, she attempts to set free the speaking subject from language. In Language: The Unknown, Kristeva stresses the close relations between psychoanalysis and language:

Let us first emphasize that psychoanalysis sees the patient’s speech as its object. The psychoanalyst has no other means within his reach, no other reality with which to explore the conscious or unconscious functioning of the subject, than speech and its laws and structures. That is where the analyst discovers the subject’s position. At the same time, psychoanalysis considers every symptom as language: it makes of the symptom a type of signifying system whose laws, similar to those of a language, must be discovered. (Kristeva 1989, 266)
To discuss Kristeva’s idea of psychoanalysis and its possible relation with language, a good example is in the third voyage of Gulliver’s Travels. In Lagado, Gulliver not only positions himself as a speaking subject to communicate with the strangers, but his speech also epitomizes a symptom which problematizes the process of signifying practice. The symptom marks a possible break within the signifying practice. Besides, it also articulates a new relationship not only between Gulliver and the other, but also between the speaking subject and what he addresses. Therefore, Gulliver assumes the role of both an addressee and an addressee because the notion of symptoms enables us to observe what Gulliver addresses associates the speaking subject with the patient. The patient-and-analyst relation may construct a discourse and temporarily re-orient my discussion from the speaking subject to the production of meaning.

The meaning effected by Gulliver offers readers a shortcut to understand the Laputians’ language system. In The Discourse of Modernism, Timothy Reiss observes that “Gulliver always learns a new language by first learning the names of things” (334). Learning the names of things requires the speaking subject, who has already acquired the knowledge of materiality of language, to apply these systems to a new situation. However, the process of naming is not stable and it is full of uncertainties and ambiguities, for any subjective imposition will unsettle the relationship between addressee and addressee. Along with Gulliver’s intended imposition, there may be some figurative power and violence in Laputians’ language system. It is not through an individual interpretation that one can genuinely capture meaning; it is through mutual communication and recognition that the dynamism of the signifying practice is generated and represented. This dynamism is attributable to the heterogeneous implication of a word or a structure whose meaning is full of ambiguities, ambivalences, and indeterminacies. But Reiss’ comment leaves something to be desired, because he does not consider the possibility of power relations. Then, a
simple question occurs: Why does Gulliver need to learn the names of things before he understands their meanings? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the linguistic system of the School of Languages.

In the School of Languages, the names of things are controlled by a group of native scientists and what they concern is the signification of naming. Naming suggests many possible dimensions, such as its literal meanings, its figurative significations, and the form of power functioning in the process of naming. The act of naming is a signifying process which hints at the possibility of replacing or representing what is absent. Hence, besides the literal and figurative meanings of Gulliver’s representation, we may also apply the ideas presented in Michel Foucault’s essay “The Subject and Power” to study the operation behind the speaking subject.

Foucault thus describes the necessity of transforming human beings into subjects:

My objective, instead, has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects. My work has dealt with three modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects. (208)

Foucault’s classification of three modes of objectification offers a different

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33 In my opinion, the literal meaning of naming is often measured by the shape and the size of the physical objects. For example, Gulliver is called “Man-Mountain” and “Grildrig” respectively in his voyages to Lilliput and Brobdingnag. These two words represent a particular aspect of Gulliver’s physical body. On the other hand, the figurative meaning of naming is obtained through a series of effective communication that the addresser gets to know the heterogeneous nature of the language because of the unstable relation between signifier and signified.

34 Foucault points out that “the first is the modes of inquiry which try to give themselves the status of sciences ….” In the second part of this essay, Foucault discusses “the objectivizing of the subject” and says that “the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him.” Finally, he seeks to find “the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject.”
perspective from Kristeva’s which equates language with psychoanalysis. Moreover, Foucault’s examination of “power relation” may help us examine the signification of the speaking subject.

According to Foucault’s theory of subject, it is quite necessary to investigate the relations between the speaking subject and the institution which dictates the rules of linguistic system. The linguistic system in the School of Languages is less like “an institution of power, or group, or elite, or class, but rather a technique, a form of power” (Foucault 1982, 212). The three professors in the academy propose a project which is similar to Foucault’s idea:

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individual subjects. There are two meanings of the word subject: subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.

(212)

In this passage, Foucault makes explicit the process of an individual becoming a subject. A law of truth is prefigured by a linguistic system; it is further established by the communication between addresser and addressee. The form of power is represented by the recognition of the others. Moreover, in addition to Foucault’s discussion of a seemingly dualistic and contradictory understanding of the subject, it should be pointed out that the meaning of the subject is still in process. There are two conspicuous examples to illustrate this contradictory form of power and the mechanical process of subjection.
The first example is Flappers in Gulliver’s third voyage. Gulliver gives an interesting description of Flappers:

. . . many in the Habits of Servants, with a blown Bladder fastened like a Flail to the End of a short Stick, which they carried in their Hands. In each Bladder was a small Quantity of dried Pease, or little Pebbles. With these Bladders they now and then flapped the Mouths and Ears of those who stood near them, of which Practice I could not conceive the Meaning. (149)

Before visiting the School of Languages, Gulliver has observed the strangeness of the inhabitants of the Flying Island because they are easily affected by “intense Speculations” (149). Thus, the function of Flappers is to help their masters avoid this strange behavior. It is apparent that without Flappers, their masters, including the king of Laputa, may encounter many difficulties in their daily life. To a certain degree, the presence of Flappers may prevent their masters from making blunders.35 However, what is significant is that it addresses a power relation which lies in that the existence of Flappers is regarded as an additional but indispensable device for their masters in the Flying Island. On the contrary, the Laputians who easily come down with meditations are viewed as the subject to command the linguistic rules in their language. In other words, the subjectivity of the Laputians is challenged and even subjugated by Flappers.

35 One of the blunders is particularly mentioned by Gulliver when he was ascending to the Flying Island: “while we were ascending, they forgot several Times what they were about, and left me to myself, till their Memories were again roused by their Flappers; for they appeared altogether unmoved by the Sight of my foreign Habit and Countenance, and by the Shouts of the Vulgar, whose Thoughts and Minds were more disengaged” (150). It is unusual that these ushers do not make any communication with their guest, Gulliver; the “disengaged thoughts and minds” of these inhabitants proves that the existence of Flappers may be a substitute for using language. This incident has already revealed the dysfunctional aspect of the linguistic system which is related to the proposal of eliminating all words by the School of Languages.
Therefore, Forster goes further to criticize that “the penalty for this [technological domination] is severe: the Laputians become inhuman” (182). Thus, the Flapper is more like a technological instrument attached to the Laputians. It is important to point out that the Laputians are regarded as the masters of Flappers. However, as a speaking subject, Gulliver is confined within this subject-to-subjugated relation, and it is against this form of domination that Gulliver struggles. The regulation of everyday speech and behavior is exercised through the communication of the subjects. So the presence of Gulliver in the third voyage problematizes this power relation whose nature is described by Foucault:

The exercise of power is not a naked fact, an institutional right, nor is it structure which holds out or is smashed: it is elaborated, transformed, organized; it endows itself with processes which are more or less adjusted to the situation. (224)

As an independent subject, Gulliver distinguishes himself from those Laputians in recognizing the power relations of this social and linguistic system. The relationship between Flappers and their masters is taken as a point of departure to examine not only the linguistic institution or organization, but also the modes of action defined by and imposed upon others. In this sense, the actions and reactions are weaved together by a web of social network which designates a specific way that both Flappers and their masters abide by.

Besides the modes of action represented by the relationship between Flappers and their masters abide by.

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36 It should be clarified that as an independent subject, Gulliver is not essentially free, for he is affected by an internal influence that I have discussed in the previous chapter. For example, the “compulsion to repeat” which Freud discusses not only motivates Gulliver to travel, but also stresses the nature of repetitiveness to undergo a travel. However, language plays a different role when a person encounters others. It is a dynamic concept to regard Gulliver as a free subject to use language, because he has an opportunity to recognize and confront the signifying practices in the Laputians’ linguistic system. Moreover, on account of the multiplicity of this practice, being recognized by the Houyhnhnms as a stranger may eventually produce a displaced subject that I will discuss in the next chapter.
and their masters, the specific idea of how “it [the exercise of power] is elaborated, transformed, and organized” returns to the problematic of the production of meaning and how meanings are produced and negated may suggest a possible way to solve Foucault’s dilemma. The importance of how meanings are produced and negated emphasizes that power not only “endows itself with processes,” but also posits a relation between two speaking subjects. Then, from the naming of language, through the Laputians’ daily practice of their language, finally to the signifying process of language, what is the function of the speaking subject in this particular situation? The natives in the Flying Island seem to make “things” easier than ever. For the Laputians, language itself is rendered as a mechanical device; it is the “things” which replace any concept or process. In Lagado, speaking is regarded as detrimental to health, so words are replaced by concrete “things [which] would be more convenient for all Men to carry about them, such Things as were necessary to express the particular Business they are to discourse on” (177).

Associating this lack of communication in Lagado with the rest of Gulliver’s Travels, readers may feel that a one-dimensional angle of language is far from unequivocal; this one-dimensionality is particularly represented by their abolition of words. However, this one-dimensional perspective of language is also intensified by Gulliver himself, one of the most conspicuous examples being Gulliver’s mechanical inclination toward language at the dinner table:

While we were at Dinner, I made bold to ask the Names of several Things in their Language; and those noble Persons, by the Assistance of their Flappers, delighted to give me Answers, hoping to raise my Admiration of their great Abilities, if I could be brought to converse with them. I was soon to call for Bread, and Drink, or whatever else I wanted. (151)

It is important not to underestimate the significance of this event, for Gulliver is forced to realize the possible lack of communication in this island. With further study
of their books, Gulliver has situated himself in a world of representation which characterizes their linguistic system. Thus, in *A Reading of Gulliver’s Travels*, Kathleen Swaim points out that “he [Gulliver] is taught language through the representationalism […] through visual experience with objectifications of concepts. In these processes language becomes limited generally and reduced specifically to parts of speech” (133). The “representationalism” is a method to reduce language into a product of visual experiences. Moreover, it is ludicrous for Gulliver to carry “Things” that he would like to speak about while traveling; that is to say, the signifying practices of language become impossible because these “Things” have presupposed a condition of self-restriction while the speaking subject is generating meanings.

In order to further study the speaking subject, I need to explore language with the help of psychoanalysis\(^\text{37}\) because “the conscious or unconscious functioning of the subject” may contribute to differences in meaning. Here, the “laws and structures of speech” are conditioned by its self-restriction. There are two ways to explain this self-restriction. First, the sign of the “Things” prefigures their referents; however, the collection of referents is combined to build the sign. That is to say, these referents may enable multiple and ambiguous meanings of a word and their presence thus somehow undermines its unity and totality. Under no circumstances will Gulliver become a speaking subject, if he does not know the referents that the signs of the “Things” represent. On the other hand, the Laputians’ representation of these objects

\(^{37}\) In *Language: The Unknown*, Kristeva regards Freud’s work as an unfinished project to understand human’s language. She argues that “the problem of the close relations between psychoanalysis and language is complex, and we will deal here only with a few of its aspects. Let us first emphasize that psychoanalysis sees the patient’s speech as its object. The psychoanalyst has no other means within his reach, no other reality with which to explore the conscious or unconscious functioning of the subject, than speech and its laws and structures. That is where the analyst discovers the subject’s position” (266).
shows that the real “Things” cannot express abstract ideas. Moreover, the psychoanalytic interpretation of language reiterates the unstable relationship between signifier and signified. In this sense, the second way to describe this self-restriction is to recognize the fact that each referent is constructed by the signifying practices between two speaking subjects. Nevertheless, the continuity of the chain of signification is not reliable because Gulliver’s semiotic system is essentially at odds with the Laputians’. For Gulliver, the conflict between signifier and signified may produce a “thetic break” which also highlights the division between the semiotic and the symbolic.

In Reading Kristeva, Oliver points out that Kristeva’s thetic phase is “the break into, and boundary of, the Symbolic.” He argues:

The thetic phase in the signifying process operates as a break, a threshold. It is the point at which the subject takes up a position, an identification. The thetic is necessary for any symbolic or social functioning. It is, however, the semiotic—the drives and their articulation—that gives rise to the thetic break. […] The thetic break is the result of the mirror stage where the child recognizes itself as a separate subject through the other of its image. (40)

Here, the semiotic and the symbolic are interdependent, and the former requires laws and boundaries to transform the signifying practice. The laws also restrain and frustrate the semiotic which functions as a precondition of any signification. Although the semiotic is conditioned prior to any production of meaning, it is not an enclosure. The gap between signifier and signified in the Laputians’ language system is made possible through “the drives and their articulation” inherent in the semiotic. That is why Gulliver in Laputa needs to go through what Swaim describes as “representationalism,” a way to understand what they say by means of concrete
things. For example, the existence of Flappers as an external communicational device is to posit the limitation of human representation in Laputa. This limitation captures the nature of psychoanalytic treatment and raises a poignant question: If a referent of a word means something undesirable, how can Gulliver represent while what the speaking subject has represented already shatters his subjectivity. In other words, what Gulliver has said or represented in alien places may examine his subjectivity that the traveling subject has formed in his homeland. The undesirable referent may be fear, horror, or uncanny experiences that would undermine Gulliver as a speaking subject.

Since I have mentioned the problem of naming in the School of Languages, it is possible to open up a new perspective to discuss the psychological symptoms in the “School of political Projectors.” If the elimination of words challenges Gulliver’s position as a speaking subject, the total homogenization of language may endanger the signifying practices of the linguistic system. It demotes languages into mathematical representations which inhibit any other intentional digression or effective relationship by which referents may generate meanings. It also echoes Reiss’s argument that to learn a new language Gulliver must first know the names of things, for the speaking subject can use his common understanding of languages to decode what the Laputians mean. But what cannot be decoded is represented by

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38 Swaim calls upon readers to participate in the process of this “representationalism” which “embodies the substance and mode of analysis. To analyze is to confine, to secure, to categorize—to embrace what I have called the commitment to limitations and the consequences of that commitment” (146).

39 Swaim compares the concept of “representationalism” with mathematics by claiming that “the representational mode emerges again in the new method of learning mathematics by digesting and thus absorbing verbal symbols for thought. The emphasis is repeatedly upon limitation and away from the establishment of meaningful relationships; the effects would be to confine concepts and to destroy all relationships among them altogether” (139).
Gulliver in the “School of political Projectors” where the speaking subject is “ill entertained”, for the professors are completely “out of their Senses” and conceive of “many other wild impossible Chimaeras” (179). It is noteworthy that an ingenious doctor comes to solve the conflicts between the political parties in a country. Here is Gulliver’s description of the doctor’s device:

When Parties in a State are violent, he offered a wonderful Contrivance to reconcile them. [...] the two half Brains being left to debate the Matter between themselves within the Space of one Scull, would soon come to a good Understanding, and produce that Moderation as well as Regularity of Thinking, so much to be wished for in the Heads of those, who imagine they came into the World only to watch and govern its Motion: And as to the Difference of Brains in Quantity or Quality, among those who are Directors in Faction; the Doctor assured us from his own Knowledge, that it was a perfect Trifle. (181).

Gulliver’s account of this passage addresses a possible connection between speaking and thinking. In the School of Languages, the absurdity of the linguistic system is featured by the presence of Flappers who function as an objectification of the communicational process. The existence of Flappers not only reveals the fact that their masters are subjugated to them, but also implies that the relations between Flapper and their masters may be derived from a division within the brain. Moreover, the separation of the brain into two halves suggests that a psychological symptom has already prevailed among their society in the way they behave. Moreover, the doctor also recognizes “the Difference of Brains in Quantity or Quality” as “a perfect Trifle.”

Thus, in “Lagado: Swift’s Satire of Scientific Knowledge,” Clive Probyn connects the separation of the brain with the idea of schizophrenia:

This ludicrously mechanical solution to an intellectual problem both
ridicules those who suffer from its symptoms and deepens the dismay of those who have watched its social effects. The passage ends with a fine and dismissive irony [...] at the same time suggests that in their professional life they are externalizing their own schizophrenia. (113)

The society of Laputa is epitomized by the externalization of their psychological symptoms. The effective way to discuss this externalization is to examine the speaking subject; besides, the psychological symptoms of Laputians may be embedded and functioned in its language system. Because the signifying practice of the linguistic system in Laputa allows for a psychoanalytic interpretation of language, it is necessary for me to discuss the relation between a speaking subject and the strangers. The position of the speaking subject is constantly engaged by and confronted with the representation of the others.

Accordingly, for a more thorough and substantial discussion of language, I need to contrast Flappers in Laputa with the Yahoos in the Houyhnhnm-land because the linguistic system in the latter engages the speaking subject with the travel narrative. Along with the world of the Houyhnhnm-land, the Yahoos are regarded as an abominable existence. What the Yahoos represent in the fourth voyage may offer a different interpretation of human body and the idea of rationality. Moreover, the relationship between the speaking subject and the speech is addressed by Michel de Certeau, who describes that “only an appeal to the senses and a link to the body seem capable of bringing closer and guaranteeing, in a singular but in a disputable fashion, the real that was lost by language” (De Certeau 1986, 74). Thus, de Certeau means that “the real” in language may be grasped and experienced through the five senses of the body. Prior to any production of meaning, the presence of the human affirms that the objects in the physical world are conceivable and interpretable. In addition, Gulliver is both a speaking subject and a receiver of linguistic signs who distances
himself from the familiar signs at home and searches for the unified and universal meanings in exotic places. However, what he has obtained is all disparate, discontinuous, and heterogeneous pieces of practices. Thus, it is not only to decode meanings from the representations of the others, but also to constantly re-encode meanings through the connection between body and speech. As a result, the reproduction of meaning is made possible by Gulliver and the strangers and the direct encounter and communication between them also establish Gulliver’s position as a faithful witness.\footnote{De Certeau connects the witness with the text and suggests three types of operations of the text. The first type is called “vulgar opinion,” which is devoid of reason. The second one comes from an ordinary man who is capable of being a traveler. And he argues that “travel experience is what the Ancients were lacking in.” The last one comes from a faithful witness whose “reliability is what the Moderns lack.” Hence, de Certeau clearly concludes that “this craftsman of information becomes the pivot of the text” (71). Within the scope of travel narrative, \textit{Gulliver’s Travels} may situate itself between the Ancients and the Moderns. It is very important to note that Gulliver may be too “faithful” that through the representations of the strangers in the fourth voyage, \textit{Gulliver’s Travels} becomes one of the most satirical works in world literature.}

In the Houyhnhnm-land, the speaking subject encounters a different linguistic system from that of the School of Languages. It should first be noted that to reach the perfectibility of a linguistic system is to tilt at windmills. And the seemingly perfect feature of the Houyhnhnms’ linguistic system is represented by the function of sound, word, and syntactical structure. Moreover, the idea of “\textit{the Thing which was not}” suggests that the linguistic system of the Houyhnhnm-land may be primitive. As a European traveler, Gulliver may find himself living in a barbaric world where the inhabitants use an unknown language.

To have a more thorough understanding of the problem of the signifying practice in the Houyhnhnm-land, I would like to resort to the background of Swift’s writing. Reiss has this to say about Swift’s tendency of “relapsing into Barbarity”:
Worry over the perfectibility of language for use as an instrument to communicate and gather knowledge was a general critical and philosophical preoccupation before and during the time Swift is writing. He himself in the *Tatler* […] pointed to ‘a natural Tendency towards relapsing into Barbarity, which delighteth in monosyllables […] when we are already overloaded with monosyllables’. (340)

This passage addresses the double edges of the signifying practice in the linguistic system. First, to communicate with and represent others is to establish a power relation with them. “Gathering knowledge” and practicing on the natives provide Gulliver with a privileged position to maneuver the process of representation. Furthermore, a sense of barbarity is not caused by the representation of monosyllables, but by Gulliver’s previous acquisition of language. Before Gulliver’s last voyage to the Houyhnhnm-land, readers may be confused by the project of the “grand Academy of Lagado.” If Lagado is left with unsolved problems, the Houyhnhnm-land offers possible solutions. The mechanism of language in the School of Languages is challenged by the signifying practices of the inhabitants in the Houyhnhnm-land. For Gulliver is mentally forced to unlearn some of the linguistic regulations that he has already acquired not only in Europe but also in his previous voyages. Through a constant dialogue with the Houyhnhnms and the Yahoos, Gulliver may reassure the process of signifying practices not only in their ambiguity but also in their self-limitation. The ambiguity in the signifying practice may produce diverse meanings, while the essential materiality of language will limit its scope. By focusing on this dual feature of language, Gulliver may encounter two problems from the linguistic system of the Houyhnhnms: signification of rationality and the “strangeness” of the discourse.

The idea of discourse presupposes the position of a speaking subject and offers
a psychoanalytic perspective which is named by Kristeva as the “discourse of a subject” and is used to reject prevailing concepts in current linguistics:

> Psychoanalysis renders impossible the habit commonly accepted by current linguistics of considering language outside its realization in discourse, that is, by forgetting that language does not exist outside the discourse of a subject, or by considering this subject as implicit, as equal to himself, as a fixed unit coinciding with his discourse. (274)

It is necessary to associate the speaking subject with the discourse which may be prefigured by the presence of others. Throughout the process of representation, the speaking subject may or may not realize the possibility that the discourse of others has already played a role in the process. Moreover, the subjectivity and the meaning are produced in the discursive act. From this perspective, we can reassess Reiss’s comment on the discourse of the subjects in the Houyhnhnm-land. The differences in the linguistic systems between Gulliver and the strangers are highlighted by the fundamental “strangeness” of the discourse:

> The “strangeness” of the discourse here concerns the apparent lack of coincidence between its own order and the order of nature: the Houyhnhnm cannot comprehend why they should differ. This assumption of automatic correspondence between words and things also applies, needless to say, to language use in general. (Reiss 1982, 341)

The most remarkable example is that the Houyhnhnms are not able to conceive the ideas of falsehood and misunderstanding, though the presence of the Yahoos

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41 Kristeva states that “it is not a production as defined by generative grammar […] and is content to synthesize a structure in the course of a process that does not for one second questions the foundations of that structure. The production of meaning is instead an actual production that traverses the surface of the uttered discourse, and that engenders in the enunciation—a new stratum opened up in the analysis of language—a particular meaning with a particular subject” (275).
threatens to undermine the perfect linguistic system of that exotic place. The existence of the Yahoos suggests the possibility of exclusiveness, like the term “the Thing which was not.” Moreover, the Houyhnhnms seek an expedient to maneuver their morphology by adding the epithet “Yahoo” at the end of each word which is related to falsehood, folly, and deceit. And the addition of the epithet “yahoo” also reiterates the possible rupture between signifier and signified in the process of the signifying practice. Thus, in the Houyhnhnms-land, the naming of language becomes insignificant; what is important is that the communication between Gulliver and the Houyhnhnms may construct a semiotic network. Through the representations of images and objects in exotic places, Gulliver may realize that what he has proposed or judged is limited by his split subjectivity.42

In addition to adding an epithet to each word, another conspicuous example to address Gulliver’s split subjectivity is the rendering of “the Thing which was not” (332). And this split subjectivity is established by an irrepresible drive.43 Reiss argues:

For the Houyhnhnms presuppose an identity of discourse and concept (and indeed of thing); they have built into the system an a priori assumption of an absence of falsehood […] no concept corresponds to a false assertion, and since all words correspond to concepts […] a false assertion is not only impossible to make but is literally inconceivable. (343)

42 In the previous chapter, I have mentioned Gulliver’s urinating scene in Lilliput and the way his subjectivity is under threat by what he has perceived and represented. Gulliver’s split subjectivity is also caused by Freudian idea of the “fort-da” game that a sense of repetitiveness renders an effective way to undermine the totality of Gulliver’s subjectivity.

43 The term “drive” corresponds to Freud’s “Trieb,” which is often mistranslated as “instinct.” The adjectival form of drive is not “instinctive,” but “instinctual” (Freud 1961, xxxiv-xxxv).
This passage states that the limits of the world may be the limits of language. The nonexistence of falsehood provides a powerful evidence to indicate the linguistic violence that Gulliver also intends to impose upon meanings by his rationality. The radical simplification of “the Thing which was not” defines the subtle differences of discourse among truth, fiction, and falsehood.

In *Factions’ Fictions*, Daniel Eilon asserts, “in fact, speech acts perform many more functions than simply transmitting data. Criticism, allusion, apology, promise, threat, prayer, ridicule and imprecation are just a few of the functions of language […]” (71). In the Houyhnhnm-land, the symbolic acts, such as “allusion, threat, and ridicule” have already challenged the idea of rationality. The expression “the Thing which was not” may serve to explain the rupture resulted from the signifying practice. In addition, is it possible to claim that the behavior of representing the traveled world is attributable to Gulliver’s rationality? If it is, Gulliver is not only a speaking subject, but also a threatening other who wields the power of rationality over the others. If not, Gulliver’s communications and representations in the Houyhnhnm-land show that the idea of rationality may merely be regarded as a psychological symptom. In other words, Gulliver’s position as a speaking subject in a world of strangers has already posited a hypothesis that he may need his maternal language to help him recognize who he is through communications and representations.

Nevertheless, the function of the maternal language is not just to translate the signification in a foreign language and decode their words into a signifiable meaning.

44 The presence of the Yahoos in the Houyhnhnm-land is a stark contrast with the previous travels that Gulliver has undergone. Thus, he describes that “upon the whole, I never beheld in all my Travels so disagreeable an Animal, or one against which I naturally conceived so strong an Antipathy. So that thinking I had seen enough, full of Contempt and Aversion […]” (215). Here, Gulliver does not conceive any physical similarity between him and the Yahoos. Throughout the fourth voyage, readers may find that the relation between the Yahoos and the Houyhnhnms is represented by a master-and-slave discourse that the Houyhnhnms occupy the position of the speaking subject.
or representation. The “rational” Gulliver is privileged to presuppose that the Houyhnhnm’s linguistic system implies an absurd side of language. Although the materiality of language has determined a large part of everyday life, Gulliver’s rationality still leaves some space for readers to interpret and appropriate. Thus, for Gulliver to acquire a new language in exotic places is just like what Kristeva says in _Strangers to Ourselves_, “lacking the reins of the maternal tongue, the foreigner who learns a new language is capable of unforeseen audacities when using it—intellectual daring and obscenities as well” (31). The unfettering of the maternal tongue enables Gulliver to directly decode the meanings represented in exotic cultures, and the tension between two disparate linguistic systems may reach its culmination after the banished Gulliver in Don Pedro’s ship returns to his home country.45

Why is Gulliver so astonished by the expression “the Thing which was _not_” in the Houyhnhnm-land? On the one hand, the exclusiveness of “the Thing which was _not_” bespeaks a possible question in language: the legitimacy of the speaking subject. Gulliver is both a faithful witness and a speaking subject who frames the travel narrative. But does Gulliver represent an “othering machine” the way that Islam refers to Marco Polo in _The Ethics of Travel_? Like Marco Polo, Gulliver is a European traveler whose “moved body” addresses that:

> A “sedentary traveler”, frigid with the morbid fear of encounter, moves in space either to seek confirmation of her/his ego-centric self in the mirror of the other, or to capture the other in representation in the paranoiac

45 Gulliver thus describes his meeting with Captain Don Pedro, “I gave him a very short Relation of my Voyage […] All which he looked upon as if it were a Dream or a Vision; whereat I took great Offence: For I had quite forgot the Faculty of Lying, so peculiar to _Yahoos_ in all Countries where they preside, and consequently the Disposition of suspecting Truth in others of their own Species. I asked him, Whether it were the Custom of his Country to _say the Thing that was not_? I assured him I almost forgot what he meant by Falsehood […]” (279).
gesture of othering, thus never becoming-other. Moreover, sedentary travel has been an important technology in the armoury of the West in its pursuit of mastery over the rest of the world.” (209)

Unlike Marco Polo, Gulliver may be more malleable in understanding and assimilating other cultures, though his subjectivity is also produced by the others in exotic lands. The image and representation of strangers in the Houyhnhnm-land may problematize the totality of Gulliver’s subjectivity. Hence, *Gulliver’s Travels* is not a book of a traveling machine of othering, because Gulliver’s subjectivity is also challenged by the strangers he encounters in exotic lands. In other words, this eighteenth century literary piece is a series of outbound travels, encounters with the others, and discourses that challenge, destroy, and at the same time reassure the position of a subject in a world of strangers.

On the other hand, Gulliver is reluctant to recognize the fear hidden behind this exclusiveness. For Gulliver, each word should be put in a proper place and given a proper meaning. However, the Houyhnhnms’ expression “the Thing which was not” completely undermines his concept. In fact, it suggests a possible connection between speech and psychoanalysis. And Gulliver’s psychological symptom may result from the signifying process as described in Kristeva’s “semanalysis.” In “Something to Be Scared of,” Kristeva shows her concern about the relationship between the formation of the subject and the signifying practice of language. She focuses on the matter of the object and points out a possible question: “the connection between the unconscious and language—what is the share of language learning or language activity in the constitution of object relation and its transformations?” (33). Unlike Gulliver as a

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Kristeva says, “when psychoanalysts speak of an object they speak of the object of desire as it is elaborated within the Oedipian triangle. According to that trope, the father is the mainstay of the law and the mother the prototype of the object. […] She is the other subject, an object that guarantees my being as subject. The mother is my first object—both desiring and signifiable” (32).
speaking subject discussed earlier, he encounters the object of desire represented by the unnamable and undesirable part of language. The representation of others is interrelated to wield influence over Gulliver’s subjectivity even after he returns to his country. The object of desire is explicitly characterized by Gulliver’s imitation of the Houyhnhnms. His split subject is originated from his encounters with the Yahoos. The unnamable part of language is a specific phenomenon to indicate that Gulliver is neither an encoder nor a decoder concerning the signs in the Houyhnhnms’ linguistic system, but a split subject that ridicules the unity and totality of subjectivity in this ambiguous world.

Obviously, the fear of the unnamable may be derived from Gulliver’s unwillingness to acknowledge that the Yahoos is not a deformed creature or disturbing others but the root of his anguish. Moreover, the idea of rationality is not only taunted by the presence of the Yahoos, but it also suggests a “thetic” phase which regulates the instinctual drive. Kristeva argues:

the phobic object is a proto-writing and, conversely, any practice of speech inasmuch as it involves writing, is a language of fear … Not a language of desiring exchange of messages or objects that are transmitted in a social contract of communication and desire beyond want, but a language of want, of the fear that edges up to it and runs along its edges. The one who tries to utter this “not yet a place,” this no-grounds, can obviously only do so backwards, starting from an over-mastery of the linguistic and rhetorical code. But in the last analysis he refers to fear—a terrifying, abject referent. (38)

In this chapter, I provide two examples from Laputa and Houyhnhnml-land to describe how they use their languages in daily life. The meaning of Laputa elicits the problem of materiality of language, and Laputians’ abolition of word offers an
interesting point for readers to understand the relation between language and subject. Kristeva’s idea of language is also adopted to describe the dynamic aspect of language. In addition, through my previous discussion of the linguistic system in Laputa and Houyhnhnm-land, Gulliver is not just to decode and encode what the strangers speak or what they mean; his communication with the Houyhnhnmns indicates a certain psychological symptom because of the epithet “Yahoo.” The signifying practice between Gulliver and others also suggests a fundamental difference between two linguistic systems. The most conspicuous example is “the Thing which was not” which investigates the undesirable part of language. Hence, what Gulliver has perceived and represented in exotic lands may undermine his position as a speaking subject.