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Geopolitical Dynamics in The Golden Ocean by Patrick O'Brian[1]

Patrick O'Brian'ın The Golden Ocean Romanında Jeopolitik Dinamikler

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Abstract

Literary works, as a medium for conveying cultural messages, play a pivotal role in both generating and disseminating political hegemony. The recent incorporation of critical geopolitics into literary criticism, originally an offshoot of international relations, signifies an expansion of its analytical purview to scrutinise literary works and expose latent political practices. At the core of critical geopolitics is the assertion that geopolitics is not an impartial framework but a socially, culturally, and politically constructed discourse designed to organise global politics. The methodology of critical geopolitics entails a meticulous examination and delineation of discourses that shape a specific mindset, adhering to particular understandings and objectives. This scrutiny of discourses unveils the intricate interplay between geopolitics and knowledge production, wherein specific political and cultural assumptions are unequivocally presented as universal truths. Thus, the resultant knowledge reflects not only the unique mindset of a particular subject and culture but also perpetuates the marginalisation of alternative perspectives. In essence, the knowledge generated within the realm of geopolitics, encompassing perceptions of place and identity, is inherently non-neutral; rather, it constitutes constructed representations. The discourses wielded in this construction process are subjective expressions strategically tailored to serve distinct objectives. This study endeavours to illustrate how meanings and power dynamics are intricately intertwined with these intentionally crafted representations in *The Golden Ocean* (1956) by Patrick O'Brian. Through this analysis, the study seeks to unravel the complex nexus between literature, geopolitical constructions, and the perpetuation of power relations.

Keywords

Patrick O'Brian, *The Golden Ocean*, critical geopolitics, discourse.

Öz

Kültürel mesajların aktarılmasında bir araç olarak da kullanılabilen edebî eserler, politik hegemonyanın oluşturulmasında ve yayılmasında önemli bir rol oynar. Eleştirel jeopolitiğin edebî eleştiriye dâhil edilmesi, edebî eser incelenmesinde ve örtük politik bağlantıların ortaya çıkarılmasında analitik bir genişlemeye işaret eder. Bu eleştirel bakış açısının temelinde, jeopolitiğin tarafsız olmadığı, aksine küresel politikayı düzenlemek için tasarlanmış sosyal, kültürel ve politik bir yapı olduğu iddiası bulunmaktadır. Eleştirel jeopolitiğin metodolojisi, belirli anlayışlara ve amaçlara bağlı kalarak zihniyetleri şekillendiren söylemleri titizlikle incelemeyi ve görünür kılmayı benimser. Bu söylemlerin incelenmesi, jeopolitik ve bilgi üretim süreci arasındaki belirli politik ve kültürel varsayımların hakikat olarak gösterilerek yansıtıldığı karmaşık etkileşimi ortaya çıkarır. Böylece, üretilen bilgi, sadece belirli bir öznenin ve kültürün zihniyetini değil aynı zamanda alternatif bakış açılarının marjinalleştirilmesini de sürdürür. Aslında, jeopolitik düşüncenin ürettiği bilgi, mekân ve kimlik algısı yaratır ve doğal olarak tarafsız değildir; aksine, inşa edilmiş temsilleri oluşturur. Bu inşa sürecinde kullanılan söylemler, belirli amaçlara hizmet etmek üzere stratejik olarak şekillendirilmiş öznel ifadelerdir. Bu çalışma, Patrick O'Brian'ın *The Golden Ocean* (1956) isimli eseri kapsamında anlamların ve güç dinamiklerinin bilinçli olarak oluşturulmuş bu temsillerle karmaşık bir şekilde nasıl iç içe geçtiğini ortaya koymayı hedefler. Bu analiz yoluyla, bu çalışma edebiyat, jeopolitik kurgular ve güç ilişkilerinin sürekliliği arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi çözmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Patrick O'Brian, The Golden Ocean, eleştirel jeopolitik, söylem.

Introduction

Klaus Dodds (2000) argues that "[i]n a world where there is much to know, there are also many ways of knowing" (p. 30). At this point, geopolitics offers a way of perceiving and interpreting the world that we live in. Geopolitics, as a term, was originated by a Swedish political scientist named Rudolf Kjellén in 1899. He defines geopolitics as "the science, which conceives of the state as a geographical organism or as a phenomenon in space" (qtd. in Parker, 1985, p. 55). Geopolitics, a force that has shaped world history for centuries, has undergone various evaluations from different perspectives in the 20th century. As geopolitics is accepted as a way of perceiving the world, this stance is not a single-visioned scope. Since Kjellén originated the term in 1899, geopolitics has been interpreted and constructed by various intellects and reasons. As each country pursues the diplomacy of its own geography, the stances of the intellectuals correspondingly change. In that sense, geopolitics has served as a new national science having been nourished by political geography and reflecting the particular and unique perspectives of the states. While serving a function in a duty of statecraft, geopolitics is a process of producing knowledge and truths, constructing representations, and establishing boundaries through dichotomies such as self and the other, here and there, inside and outside, and identity and difference.

Although the history of geopolitical thought is as old as the history itself, the theoretical construction of geopolitics is an outcome of the 20th century. Geopolitics, verbalised as the "region of knowledge" by Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996), "was born in the colonial capitals of the rival empires of the late 19th century, within the established universities, geographical societies, and centers of learning of the Great Powers" (p. 16). The period between the end of the 19th century to the Second World War was a kind of arena for the European leading power holders and the United States, who joined by the end of the century to accomplish its imperial expansionist desires. Therefore, particular ideologies were constructed to claim particular privileges in world politics, and geopolitics was used as a practice to control and dominate territories. The main object of the intellectuals, who led the geopolitical constitution, was to find a way related to their own states' geographical characteristics to expand and survive in the dynamic world order at the turn of the century. Therefore, the ideas of these intellectuals are grounded on their own "national perspectives and experiences" (Cohen, 2003, p. 12). This era, which hosted the changing dynamics between the authoritative states, and the statecraft, which constructed knowledge that would help to forge ahead in the imperial debate, produced what we call now classical geopolitics (Flint, 2006, p. 17). The classical geopolitical understanding is state-oriented and serves the benefit of the states of the associated ideology to become the central dynamic in the political arena.

In the last quarter of the 20th century, critical geopolitics was dubbed as a new perspective to deconstruct the deep-rooted tenets of classical geopolitics. Critical geopolitics mainly argues that geopolitics is a socially, culturally, and politically constructed discourse aiming to organise world politics. Colin Flint (2006) claims that geopolitics is the creation of the privileged Western white man's perspective promoted by omniscient behaviour organising territories by contributing values and meaning to the places (p. 17). Powerholders use discourses that are asserted as 'objective' and 'true' to justify diplomacy and wars 'if it is necessary.' In this respect, geopolitical discourse cannot be considered independent from political power relations. Critical geopolitics aims to reveal how spatial representations, "an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture" (Hall, 1997, p. 15), and imaginations are constructed and how territories are geopolitically labelled and interpreted through these relations. To reinforce this claim, Ó Tuathail (1996) indicates,

> Geography was not something already possessed by the earth but an active writing of the earth by an expanding, centralizing imperial state. It was not a noun but a verb, a *geo-graphing*, an earth-writing by ambitious endocolonizing and exocolonizing states who sought to seize space and organize it to fit their own cultural visions and material interests (pp. 1, 2).

So, the writing of the earth is practised through discourses which are the "rules by which verbal speech and written statements are made meaningful", and also, they are "a set of capabilities, an ensemble of rules, by which readers/listeners and speakers/audiences are able to take what they hear and read and construct it into an organized meaningful whole" (Ó Tuathail & Agnew, 1992, p. 193). The geopolitical discourses acquiring a different dimension in the hands of the powerholders derive from the tightly coupled relationship between power and knowledge. In this context, with the consciousness that discourse and knowledge are produced by power, critical geopolitics rejects this artificial structure and examines the texts through meaning production, representations, and imaginations. The process of meaning production and constructing representations about the territories and the people are "formed by a range of practices and techniques, including bordering, dividing, conquering, excluding, enclosing, controlling, surveying, and mapping" (Elden, 2018, p. 2). So, in order to comprehend how discourse shapes perception and serves knowledge to the world, the seemingly simple and normal relations

should be examined through a critical stance. Therefore, the notion of geography considered a practice which has umbilical relations with politics, economy, and internal and external affairs is evaluated as a discursive creation. In this respect, taking this concern as a starting point, the following section of this study is framed by an analysis of the geopolitical representations and the process of meaning production from a perspective of critical geopolitics.

Geopolitical Positioning: *The Golden Ocean*

Patrick O'Brian's historical novel, *The Golden Ocean* (1956), which is the preoccupation of this study, is quite a fruitful text to be read through political affairs. It narrates the circumnavigation of Commodore Anson, a crucial event in challenging the Spanish galleon and undermining its unquestioned presence in the distant parts of colonial Spain. The Pacific route was often referred to as a golden road, as "Spanish vessels transported silver northwards from Peru to Panama, and gold, spices and jewels from the Orient to Mexico" (Konstam, 2011, p. 21). Anson's squadron set sail on September 18, 1740, from London with a secret mission to "annoy and distress" the Spanish fleet by "taking, sinking, burning or otherwise destroying all their ships" and capture the great treasure of Spanish galleon that each year run between Manila and Acapulco (Williams, 1967, pp. 34-39). *The Golden Ocean*, which frames the peak period of the struggle between England and Spain, also provides insights into the political and social relations of England and Ireland. Caren Irr (2014) notes that "any literary work may be said to be political at an unconscious level" (p. 3). However, *The Golden Ocean* explicitly and consciously incorporates political content as it narrates the rivalry between sea powers of the period, aiming to claim new geographies and establish dominance on sea routes.

Patrick O'Brian reveals his intention to narrate an adventurous story closely related to space and its various extensions by depicting the landscape of the protagonist's, Peter's, homeland. The initial pages of the novel describe the geographical features of the land in detail, suggesting that this account revolves around a place and being a part of a place. As Peter sets out on his great adventure, the author notes, "when you start out a great adventure [...] there is a feeling of something wrong in going over country you know so well" (*TGO*, p. 12). The narrative then proceeds to specify the physical features of that geography, emphasising the connection between Peter and the space. The sense of belonging is emphasised as the relation between the land and the person is clarified, with Peter being coded as Ireland and Ireland as Peter. The particularised features of the environment are identified, on the other hand, the tight nexus between the identity and the place is reflected, "[i]t was a huge and a wild landscape, and one that *a stranger* might have found inhuman and desolate; but it was Peter's *own* country" (*TGO*, p. 12, my emphasis). The attachment to a place parallels the process of describing the place and constructing the *self* and forming essential and distinctive zones. Even if the place is barren, it is Peter's homeland, so the *stranger* or *foreigner* does not reside in this circle. The adjectives, used to describe Irish geography, have importance in how it is represented by the 'superior' power, England. The implication behind 'foreign' or 'foreigner' points to the English, perceived as enemies by the Irish, as historian R. F. Foster (1989) records (p. 42). In fact, this paradigm has its roots in the political conflict between Ireland and England. According to Jane Ohlmeyer (1999), whether it is admitted or not, Ireland was ruled as a colony by England for much of the early modern period and the "English legal and parliamentary systems, the British sovereign, and the Protestant faith had a dramatic impact on the formation of the Irish state, Irish political culture, and the Irish mind" (p. 446). In this respect, England considered the Irish people and their land as subjects to control and dominate.

The aim to dominate Irish territory is fuelled by the meaning production. The representation of the English as foreigners in the minds of the Irish people is a way of coding a particular group of people and constructing the dichotomy of self/other. In this way, the Irish culture and mind are aimed to be shaped, and a two-sided meaning production process is practised. The English imperial act in Ireland was driven by the fear of foreign attack and the goal of providing a security wall for the heart of the island. Furthermore, "the desire to civilize and anglicize the Irish" (Ohlmeyer, 2016, p. 22) was of great importance in developing a security strategy. Civilising or anglicising the Irish is the practice of a 'superior' hand, generating a dichotomy between the two states. The master identity creates representation to describe the other and oppress them.

This process of creating binary opposition is advanced when the figured borders of the region are revealed in the conversation between the Irish Peter and his English superiors at the dinner table. The Irish land is initially othered as it is labelled by one of the lieutenants as "in *your* part of the world" (*TGO*, p. 74, my emphasis). In the mind of the lieutenant, the representative of the English government, the world has multiple segments, separating the earth between 'your part' and 'our part.' This division constructs other tales and images in the minds. As they mention the sea skills of the Ballynassagard people, although Peter has experienced the event at first sight, he is regarded as "a wild teller of tales" (*TGO*, p. 74). Their boats are thought to be strange while the seamen are *extremely* powerful and esoteric. The lieutenants fictionalise the tales that Peter has narrated and marginalise the people by exaggerating their physical power. The 'abnormal' representation of these people is created by the conceptual borders that frame the secured self and the unsecured other. While the object is accepted as a

source of a fantasy world, the subject is the one creating representation and imagination about the other. As the economic, political, and social implications of the places are in a constant state of flux, this change is the outcome of ideological balances. In this sense, the "politics of geo-graphing, then, does not begin as a problematic of geography and *international politics* but a problematic of the attempt to produce international politics geographically" (Ó Tuathail, 1996, p. 9). Therefore, as critical geopolitics asserts, the production of international politics is run by discursive productions that serve as a tool to have imperial domination over the *different* territories.

The systematic reconstruction of Ireland beginning in the 12th century and intensifying during the reign of Elizabeth I, and James IV and I, was based on the advantages and interests of the hegemon. Thus, in the 17th century, the king was determined to "reform his unruly subjects, [...] to reform 'uncivil' natives and to anglicize their 'barbarous' customs, practices, and culture. Finally, the king wanted full control over Irish land" (Ohlmeyer, 2016, p.22). As can be inferred from the statement of Ohlmeyer, by classifying the Irish the organised occupation is tried to be justified. This process of recreation about the characteristics of a particular state and group of people contributes to the benefits of the powerholder. In other words, the discoursive representations generate a biased, artificial, and ideological world. Similarly, in the novel, Peter and his Irish friends are exposed to being called an ethnic slur,

> "another Teague [...] the wretched island must have sunk at last"
>
> [...]
>
> 'This is the other Teague,' said Keppel.
>
> 'My name is not Teague,' cried Peter. He had had a trying day, and he was in no mood to be joked at.
>
> 'Be calm, Teague,' said another.
>
> But Peter would not take it easy: he hesitated, trying to quell the wild indignation; but he failed; it possessed him, and with a furious shriek he hurled himself upon his country's oppressors (*TGO*, pp. 62, 65).

This pejorative label is systematically used to concretise the lines between the two nations; neither the people nor the land are considered equal and valuable. The idea that Irish land is a "wretched island" to be tamed and organised was not only accepted by the government as a political act but also internalised by the English citizens and transformed into a particular characteristic. In this sense, as Ó Tuathail (1996) notes, "the geopolitical envisioning of the global scene is inseparable from the desire to use the displayed scene for one's own purposes" (p. 27). That is, the Irish island is systematically reflected as wretched, invaluable, and dismal to indicate that England's presence in that country is a favour to civilise the savage place. In parallel with the representation of the space, the Irish people are purposely illustrated as barbarous, rude, and primitive. In order to have control over a certain place, the basis of enmity must be clarified, and "the necessity of the horrors of [challenge] must be justified. Enemies are portrayed as 'barbaric' or 'evil,' their politics 'irrational' in the sense that they do not see the value of one's own political position, and their stance 'intractable'" (Flint, 2006, p. 58), and so, the struggle between the countries is the only way to 'maintain order.' Therefore, the discourse of civility constructs a geographical and political meaning for an imperial design.

With the ideological discourse established by the powerholders to dominate and control geographies, the aim is to exclude, delegitimate, and reject what they call the 'inferior other.' Thus, critical geopolitics scrutinises how these discourses are constructed and follows their roots in the depths of societies. At this point, Simon Dalby (2016) notes:

> The exclusion of the Other and the inclusion, incorporation and administration of the Same is the essential geopolitical moment. The two processes are complementary; the Other is excluded as the reverse side of the process of incorporation of the Same (p. 22).

Ideological division favouring 'us' against 'the other' is a 'neutral' result of the geopolitical act that aims to divide and control the territory. This exclusion is also practised through dissociating the features that make a community a nation, such as language. As reflected in the novel, through the dialogue between Liam and Peter, the Irish language is considered subordinate even by the Irish people themselves,

> "[...] it is bad enough to be speaking it in private the way no one can hear us, but to write it in sheets..."
>
> "What is wrong with the Gaelic?"
>
> "It is a language of the servants. And it is not good enough even for them. What kind of a place can a servant get and he speaking nothing but Irish like something that has come in out of the bog?"

"It was once the language of kings."

"I spit on your kings. It was never the language of the commerce."

"It is the language they are speaking in Paradise."

"It is not. Some few very poor and ignorant angels with hardly a feather on them yet might still speak a few words of it in the dark corners of Heaven; but the language that is rightly spoken there, is the English."

"Well," said Peter, "Irish is good enough for me."

"Your honour will please himself," said Liam sharply, "but when we meet the young gentleman in Derrynacaol I hope that your father's son will not make me blush by speaking the servants' language." (*TGO*, pp. 15, 16).

The conflict about the value of the Irish language between Liam and Peter is unexpectedly bizarre, as the language is despised and denigrated by its native people. Liam asserts that Irish is not a language that should be noticed and should only be spoken in places that no one can hear. It is only good for the fallen creatures, and it is a shame to speak in this language when there is a much better option, which is English. The idea that the Irish language is associated with ignorance is internalised even by the members of the Irish nationality. In another scene, Sean tells similar thoughts about his language, "[...] quite suddenly Sean said, 'And how will I call the King when I see him? Will I say my lord, or your honour? For I will speak in English, for glory" (*TGO*, p. 162). Sean, like Liam, is convinced that Irish is not worthy of being spoken and is not proper to use in the presence of the King. Thus, the major language should be used instead of the *lingo* to be respected, accepted, or to be a part of a community. The idea that regards the Irish language as pejorative is deeply internalised by the own members of that nation. In other words, the political identity shaped by self and the other causes a deep desire to resemble the 'superior' one. In this sense, geopolitical framing and graphing bring out cultural estrangement and dismantle unity among the people. In constructing discourse to control the region, according to Dalby (2016), while "'the Other' is seen as different if not an enemy [,] 'we' are 'the same' in that we are all citizens of the same nation, speak a similar language, share a culture" (p. 22). However, in this case, even though Liam and Peter belong to the same nationality and share the same language and culture by nature, they are alienated as a result of the politics of the countries. Despite sharing a common value, they have fallen apart because of the political discourse imposing that one part of the world is better, superior, and civil, while the other part is worse, inferior, and barbaric. So, the dominant culture is accepted as the norm while the suppressed one is ignored and degraded.

The effect of religion on the establishment of political, social, and cultural relations among the communities is as old as the history of human beings. Religion is potentially related to geopolitics as the world is mapped in terms of religious regionalism, and national identity is fed by the beliefs that a particular group of people shares. Geopolitical actors may use religious identity as a tool to deepen national unity or to claim a distinct geopolitical identity. Within this frame, people who do not share a mutual sense of assertion are categorised as the other and potential enemies to be destroyed. That is, religious differences can be a source of geopolitical conflicts. Just as ideological differences may lead to religious conflict, religious differences may also lead to ideological conflict. In this respect, the narration of O'Brian partakes in using religion as a means of constructing imaginations and producing geopolitical knowledge. This religious dispute between the countries reflects on the practices used during wartime, as the English gunner of the Centurion talks about a superstition of crossing the balls of the chase guns when he was a boy,

'[...] When I was a boy there were some old master-gunners who always made a cross on the ball before they loaded, which was left over from the old days when they aimed their pieces at the Turks

and such, and reckoned that a cross on the ball would send any Turk to hell; which is all part and parcel of the same thing, do you see? Mumbo-jumbo, as you might say.'

The connexion escaped Peter: but he very distinctly remembered that every single ball that Mr Randall had handled in the many days of gunnery practice had had its little cross (*TGO*, pp. 131, 132).

The superstitious tradition that Mr. Randall, the gunner of the *Centurion*, experienced when he was a boy originates from the religious conflict between Christianity and Islam. Here, the Muslim Turks are represented as adversaries against the Christian British. Religious differences establish the source of ideological conflict. This representation overlaps the words of Dalby (2016); the "discourse of the Other is geopolitical in the sense that it creates an external (threatening) antagonist in a particular way" (p. 41). Here, the exclusion of the Muslim Turks and their positioning as a threat play a significant role in shaping the global landscape. In this religious-oriented conversation, borders are drawn through differences, and a particular perception is created via binary oppositions, such as Christian and non-Christian or self and the other.

Conflict of interests between the countries carves out a redescription of the identity. As represented in the novel, the political challenge between Britain and the Dutch Republic in the 17th and 18th centuries produces particular identity representations. In the path of leadership at the sea, the Dutch Republic – and Portugal – were the primary competitors of Britain (qtd. in Flint, 2006, p. 37). Thus, the representations of the Dutch are constructed incidentally to the contentious relationship between the two countries. For instance, in the novel, the recruitment of the Dutchmen is not approved by the British crew because "they were obviously thieves, raparees, transported felons: [Sean] could tell by their furtive expressions and their evil little small eyes – hell-spawn, to the last ill-shaped mother's son" (*TGO*, p. 279). Identifying the Dutchmen with notorious definitions is the materialisation of the politics of government in the public. In this way, an attempt is made to portray a model of an inferior characteristic of a particular nation through discourse. As critical geopolitics asserts, the production of meaning draws a correspondence with the power relations in every political structure. In this respect, as discourse "is a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – i.e. a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic" (Hall, 1992, p. 201), discourse has the power to construct this topic in a certain way. Therefore, this marginalising attitude contributes to cultural coding. In parallel with the production of knowledge through discourse, critical geopolitics follows the tenet that discourse is a cultural and political way of describing and representing a particular place or people.

A similar representation can be observed in another rival nation, the Spanish. Representations are effective in organising a systematic rule because "[l]anguage is relation in character; that signs have no direct referents in an independent object World but generate meaning through their relationships to other signs organized into syntagmatically and pragmatically structured codes" (Barker & Galasinski, 2001, p. 2). To put it differently, language does not merely reflect the world but it is the medium that constructs it. Therefore, the specification of Spanish as a "contumelious nation" (*TGO*, p. 60) is a part of discursive legitimisation of a system that is formed by the power holder; "The chaplain said, '[...] It must have come from some ship of the Spanish Armada – many were wrecked on your shores, as I understand. What a curious reflection, that it should have come from a galleon to fit you out to serve against that same contumelious nation.'" (*TGO*, p. 60). Here, the chaplain represents the government as he is an intellectual of the country and a respectable man of God, so he is included in the process of creating meaning. The representation of the Spanish nation as "contumelious" is the contemplation of the politics that is adopted by the government. Being politically rival is integrated into life by using certain expressions, thus a certain formation is created in the minds of the people, and so the process is justified. Representing the political antagonists with specific insulting connotations is part of a cultural coding system. In this way, a particular representation is created in the light of political interests, and the process of identity formation is sustained for a particular target.

The way of describing a place comes forth as a product of a constructed mental structure. Places are described in the light of the frame of interpretation, which is intermingled with particular identity, cultural, and historical background. At this point, it is the geopolitical gaze, which is concatenated together by culture, arranging a pictorial representation, setting a scene, and constructing a message. In the novel, as the British fleet is on its way to the Pacific Ocean, the squadron stops by various harbours, and Funchal, an island of Portugal, is one of them. Peter mentions the island to his father in a letter: "This is a very strange Place, with a Hill of huge Bigness, [...] and the People are Black when they are not White [...] they do not speak English" (*TGO*, p. 105). The things that astonish Peter, who experiences a new place other than Britain, are the different physical geography of the island, the different colours of people, and the language of the 'stranger.' Here, Peter reflects his own thoughts, which are kneaded with the euro-centralist perspective that formalises the way of perceiving the world. Peter, who is constructing a representation by drawing a line between civilised and uncivilised, marginalises the native people when positioning himself as the legitimate representative of the culture. The civilisation criteria designed by the power are tried to be imposed on the others and this condition reveals how culture, civilisation, or knowledge organise and discipline people. Here, identities are defined through differences, and while one side represents the pure good, the other side represents the bad or inferior. Thus, the representation of that place as strange directly correlates with the concepts shaping the mind with a system of representations.

Definitions based on differences and the creation of dualities based on these definitions constitute one aspect of the identity-creation process. The other end of the scale is the practice of establishing unity and intimacy. Parallel to this point, in the novel, being a member of the British nation and the Royal Navy is depicted as a source of pride and privilege. In this way, a reality is tried to be produced by assessing meaning to a certain group. Sean excitedly expresses his emotions about joining the navy and sailing to the sea,

> "[...] his Reverence encouraged my heart with his noble description of the free and magnificent life in his royal Majesty's imperial fleet. [...] Sail with the royal navy into the golden ocean, far into the golden sea."

[...]

"Sail on the golden waves of the west until you can touch the sun with your hand" (*TGO*, p. 14).

The emotions that excite Sean spring from being a member of an establishment placed in an outstanding position. The desire to be a part of the navy is actually the desire to be a representative of the victories won by the navy, to be able to contribute to the expansion of the borders of the state, and to be a representative of an identity reinforced with these features. As stated in the quote, being able to touch the sun with one's hand indicates an irresistible desire for victory and being a part of this success. This expression is similar to England being referred to as the land on which the sun never sets, depicting England dominating many colonies and regions with overseas territories. It is also discursive perception management imposing the thought of the greatness of that country. In this sense, the discourse "commands the firmest belief in itself, it advances by judgements and reasonings which connect together; it is a kind of reason in action" (Foucault, 1965, pp. 96-97). Therefore, discourse serves to the perception of a noble and distinguished identity. As the identity is noble, parallelly the actions become honourable and eminent. So, the organised discourse creates an identity and legitimises and validates the actions of the British Empire. In this way, abstract reason transforms into a concrete entity. England and the Royal Navy are described with these discourses and a particular national identity is created. As geopolitical discourses basically express all kinds of linguistic, semiotic, and symbolic meanings produced under the influence of a geopolitical imagination, these discourses contain a message with the spatial and identity representations created, and as a result, form a geopolitical imagination.

Identity representations, constructed with the powerful image attributed to the British navy and the state itself, are also seen in the following pages of the novel. Political threats and matters of security contribute to a nation's identity. Potential external threats and rivals in the political power arena can foster a sense of unity and patriotism and can influence how the nation views its role in defending and representing the nation. As the main challenge in the novel is after all the power struggle between England and Spain, the representation of the British army and its presence over the seas have geopolitical importance in constructing an image of unity with an unbeatable and unrivalled existence,

> They made a brave show on the grey sea, five men-of-war in line ahead [...] It was a brave show, and it was a formidable armament as well: some two thousand men were in the ships, more than two hundred guns, and deep down, far below in the carefully laden magazines, each ship carried ton upon ton of black, gritty sharp-smelling and immensely potent gunpowder, every ounce was meant to be used, as the Fighting Instructions said, to take, burn, sink or destroy the King's enemies – in this case the ships and the cities of the power of Spain (*TGO*, p. 77).

The geopolitical threats have shaped the identity of the British nation to be brave. Whether this formation is real or not, this process is created and continued through geopolitical discourse, which "is [not] the language of truth; rather it is a discourse seeking to establish and assert its own truths" (Ó Tuathail, 1998, p. 3). So, being a member of a certain nation is a source of pride. As stated in the excerpt, the equipment of the fleet has virtually become one with the personal powers of the individuals and has become a representation of the influence they have as a nation. In this respect, the way a nation defines its presence is often influenced by geopolitical factors. Representations promoting a particular national identity or narrative are strategically used to shape public perceptions. This process underscores the dynamic interplay between geopolitical forces and the construction of national identity, illustrating how external threats and geopolitical discourse contribute to the formation and perpetuation of a nation's self-image.

Spatial representations are more than an innocent description of geography. As critical geopolitics asserts, the struggle for hegemony and domination in the geopolitical field takes place through the reproduction of discourses and spatial representations. Thus, the recreated information reproduces geographical space as a hyperreality. In this sense, the representation is not a reality but an interpreted idea, which produces classifications, reveals the differences, and serves the ideology. As geopolitics "is the discipline by which [the space is] approached systematically, as a topic of learning, discovery and practice" (Said, 2003, p. 73), critical geopolitics is about the systematic creation of geopolitical thinking and reasoning through discourses and their dissemination to the global world through geopolitical imaginations. Similarly in the novel, Britain is internalised as the centre of the world while the other distant places are represented as an object of fantasy. After six weeks of an unbroken sea voyage, the squadron arrives in Brazil, which is dubbed as fascinated "pure New World" in the novel (*TGO*, p. 119). While the crew is fascinated by the charm "of the brilliant macaws in every tree, the monkeys peering down, the wonderful fruit" (*TGO*, p. 120), the New World is represented as a source of wonder with its exotic animals and fruits and unfamiliar fauna and flora. The images and metaphors used to describe this new place are very akin to a fantasy world. The discursive idealisation and the condensed differences of that place are the ways of creating meaning conceived in the minds of the powerholders and devoted to the territorialisation of that space for the sake of political relations. Here, the

representation of Brazil as the New World that emerges through geopolitical discourse is rooted in imperial order. As Ó Tuathail (1996) argues, geopolitics "depluralizes the surface of earth by organizing it into essential zones ([...], New World, Old World, Eurosia), identities (continental, oceanic), and perspectives (the seaman's point of view, the landsman's point of view)" (p. 41). These kinds of categorisations and representations shaped by the desire to dominate international spaces are at the mercy of the fantasy world of the privileged Western group of people. For this reason, Brazil has become the addressee of the New World definition, which is the product of the Western way of thinking.

This division between the normal and abnormal is further reinforced through comparisons between the real world and the places that are accepted as fantastical. In the novel, the differences are portrayed through a pure state of nature, "the charm of the brilliant macaws in every tree, the monkeys peering down, the wonderful fruit" (*TGO*, p. 120). They are depicted as the images "of the New World as an Earthly Paradise" (Hall, 1992, p. 210), so the interpretation of the environment is determined according to the Western aesthetic conventions to which they belong. Likewise, a similar reaction is reflected when the squadron reaches the island of Juan Fernandez located in the South Pacific. Peter and his friends are fascinated with the beauties of that isle:

> "This is a wonderful place," murmured Peter, with his eyes closed. "I wish we could stay here for ever. Sean, this is the Tir na 'nOg, no doubt,"
>
> "It is that, your honour, honey," said Sean. "And a large piece of it I shall take home for Pegeen Ban, if the island does not her there before us."
>
> "How will you know which gets there first? How will you know at all?"
>
> "What are you talking about?" asked Keppel, "with your Tir Mc Thing?"
>
> "Why, it is an island, you know," said Peter, "that comes floating off the coast of our country every few years or so, and if you can reach it you stay young for ever: but it is always a great way off, and difficult to be reached. We call it Tir na 'nOg in our language." (*TGO*, p. 161).

Through this landscape, Peter draws a correspondence between Juan Fernandez and a mythological place held in Irish culture. According to Celtic mythology, Tir na 'nOg is the Irish island of the blessed, whose residents do not age nor suffer and is also known as the land of youth (Monaghan, 2004, pp. 347-348). Culturally, this place is likened to heaven, and the scene of Juan Fernandez is mystified by being labelled as an earthly paradise. In this context, the utopic beauty of that island is structured by European fantasy. The characteristics of the place are accepted as evidence to organise representations, which produces knowledge. Juan Fernandez is idealised and so kept separated from the normal and "quickly became the subject of the languages of dream and Utopia, the object of powerful fantasy" (Hall, 1992, p. 209). This produced knowledge functions as ideology serving the political interests of the superior power. Boundaries are drawn in the minds of the people by adhering to a certain point of view, and these boundaries serve the benefit of those in power. The control over the narrative and the shaping of perceptions become tools through which power is exercised, influencing public discourse and reinforcing the established order. In essence, the idealisation of a place and the subsequent construction of knowledge become integral components of a broader ideological apparatus that sustains and serves the political interests of the dominant power structures.

The interconnection between discourse, knowledge, and power ideologically produces a web of relationships between difference and representation. The geographical descriptions are not only mere observations but also descriptions of differences. So, the new places are more than new territories, they are the source of rich imagination and the representation of Western geopolitical thought. Chile and Peru are portrayed as a fantasy world with their gold reserves. Advancing from this point of view, one can argue that it is possible to call there the fantasy world because these descriptions are the representations of the other that the West has constructed and mystified. Similarly in the novel, the fantastic stories about the coast of Chile and Peru, regarded as 'the other side,' are evolved into an extravagant and exotic myth being developed by the discourses,

> [...] Great Southern Ocean [...] meant gold. Visions of treasure filled the gun-deck [...] St. Catherine's tales had come aboard of Indian tribes who used gold fish-hooks, and gold to weigh down their nets, tribes where the children played at alley-tor with marbles made of gold; and the more these tales repeated by their original hearers the more their fascinated audiences asked for more. There were tales of the Incas, shining in armour made of gold, and of the Spaniards who took all the gold away and shipped it to Old Spain in galleons every year: hundreds of these tales, many with a strong vein of truth, and all believed (*TGO*, p. 133).

The tales of gold capture the sailors of the navy and they cannot do anything but believe in the exaggerated and fantastic stories of *the other side* of the Horn. The transformation of the unreliable account into a reality, keenly followed, is achieved by producing knowledge about an unknown space. This knowledge works for the ideology of the privileged nations to dominate these coasts, which are represented as the source of gold that must be possessed. As Roland Barthes (1989) accounts, "narrative structure, elaborated in the crucible of fictions (through myths and early epics), becomes both sign and proof of reality" (p. 140). That is, the discourse developed in a fictional narrative structure transforms into a reality that is accepted by a group of people. These tales construct a representation of place and people through a discursive practice fostering the common knowledge that makes the place a target for imperial practices. In this sense, by creating representation and knowledge about the Indian tribes, the details about their daily activities and the Incas, the superior country creates an image of a place that must be possessed, dominated, and imperialised. As the process of creating knowledge goes on, the sustenance of domination goes on. Thus, critical geopolitics aims to describe that the spatial representations and identical images, which are demonstrated as real, change according to the ideologies. In other words, geopolitical representations are created through discourse and the meanings are produced through language games.

Another way to produce representation is through the tacit maps. Even though they are not verbalised outputs, the drawings are the product of a particular mentality and shape people's mindsets. Places are concretised through maps, which are fundamentally involved in producing knowledge, constructing reality, and the continuity of power. The connection between seeing and drawing creates "maps that are nonlinguistic pictures" and this is a "system of signification, a genre of writing, an already encoded surface" (Ó Tuathail, 1996, pp. 83-84). In this sense, maps pursue the interests of a particular subject, and "these interests are embodied in the map as presences and absences. Every map shows *this* ... but not *that*, and every map shows what it shows this *way* ... but not *the other*" (Wood, 1992, p. 1). Historically, from the 16th century, maps occupied such a significant position in the expansive plans of the European countries that they served as a tool to practise the strategies of a state (Wanberg, 2020, p. 5). In these respects, the relationship between drawing maps and geopolitics is complicated and multifaceted. Maps are not just neutral representations of geographical features but they can be powerful tools that influence and reflect geopolitical realities. Places and people are not perceived on their own terms, but they are demonstrated within the conceptualisation of the superior power's understanding and system. As maps play a significant role in defining and demarcating borders between nations, they can be used to pursue political claims. At this point, in the novel, Britain is considered as the centre of the world, so the rest is identified as dependent. Thus, the new places are not described by the peculiarities but by the standards of the already-known model. In this respect, the circumnavigation of Anson is important in mapping the coastlines and creating a new consciousness and knowledge about the perception of the particular geographies as it is reflected in *The Golden Ocean*. The British squadron reaches Staten Island, which is desolate and

> barely charted land and sea, rarely traversed by Englishmen except for a few buccaneers, and they too busy keeping afloat to make accurate observations. Beside [the Commodore] Mr Brett worked diligently at his easel, drawing the coast-line – a strange implement aboard a man-of-war, and a strange occupation for the acting first lieutenant (*TGO*, p. 139).

Even though the practice of drawing is not approved by the crew of the *Centurion*, as it is considered a lady-like accomplishment, this profession is a part of producing knowledge rather than breaking a tradition. The totality of the representations through drawings constitutes mapping that serves for the geopolitical gaze to interpret the territory. As such, observations are not mere discovery, and maps are not just informative drawings but they are embedded in political contexts. There is no better example of collecting information for national concerns than mapping, as information is a critical resource in shaping and carrying out geopolitical strategies. There is an agreement between the grapher, the creator of the map, and the user: "[t]he map user understands the mapmaker to have represented a certain territory with fidelity and according to accepted principles. This understandings shapes and directs the map user's gaze" (Godlewska, 2001, p. 19). Thus, the map's user gaze, in other words, geopolitical strategies often focus on control, dominance, and access to places and resources; and maps visualise these spatial dynamics.

Conclusion

As indicated by the preceding discussion, geopolitical discourses are designated by ideologies rooted in religion, race, nationalism, and patriarchy, influencing perceptions of identity and difference. As literature serves as a medium for the transmission of cultural norms and beliefs, by presenting a certain belief within the context of the narration, literature helps preserve and propagate ideologies. In this sense, the subjective and pragmatic language of geopolitics, which aims to construct representations, is reproduced in literary narratives. Therefore, "[w]hat is said or written by political élites comes about as a result of the unconscious adoption of rules of living, thinking and speaking that are implicit in the texts, speeches

or documents that are produced" (Agnew & Corbridge, 1995, p. 47). Shaping perceptions of particular places, influencing the way readers interpret the environment, constructing national and cultural identities by reiterating geopolitical power structures, and finally creating mental maps of the world are of uttermost significance in geopolitical positioning. Through narrative exploration, literature becomes a mirror reflecting and refracting geopolitical discourses, making them accessible to the conventional mindset. In these respects, O'Brian's *The Golden Ocean* serves as a valuable illustration of how geopolitical discourses are not only created but also subtly woven into the fabric of the collective consciousness, shaping the way individuals perceive and make sense of the world around them.

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