Waving the Straw Hat Pirates' Jolly Roger – Toward a Transcultural Psychoanalysis of Desire, Protest, and Solidarity through Anime

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Abstract

Across recent protest movements in Nepal, Indonesia, and the Philippines, depictions of the Straw Hat Pirates' Jolly Roger from the anime *One Piece* (1997 - present) has appeared on banners, placards, and social media posts as an emblem of moral defiance and collective hope. What is depicted as a symbol for loyalty, friendship, and freedom in the anime, the flag transforms into a civic affective statement against oppression, injustice, and corruption. It reveals how transcultural media, such as anime and manga, circulate through Southeast Asian youth cultures as emotional and ethical anchor points in times of unrest.

Given this background, I pose the question, how the mediated symbolism resonates throughout these different protests, e.g., in online commentary, memes, and political actions, and which shared imaginary and desires underlie this transcultural movement. While taking the contextual differences between Nepalese, Indonesian, and Filipino movements into account, my analysis focuses on the identification of shared psychic phenomena, such as identification with the righteous outlaw, projection of corruption and oppression, and collective imaginations of liberation and belonging.

By drawing from Frantz Fanon's postcolonial psychoanalysis as well as from a postcolonial conception of transculturality based on Homi K. Bhabha's notion of culture, I propose a transcultural psychoanalytical approach for examining how unconscious dynamics, like desire, anxiety, and solidarity, circulate through East- and Southeast-Asian youth cultures. Through this lens, the Straw Hat flag becomes a medium of transcultural affective resonance that links regional struggles into an emergent transregional ethics of resistance.

Keywords: Transculturality, Postcolonial Psychoanalysis, Resonance, Protest Culture, Anime