

Copycatting Culture Study: A Perspective of Bakhtin's Carnival Theory

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Abstract:

From copycatting products to copycatting culture, “copycatting” is bearing more and more cultural value which has been explored by scholars from different viewpoints. Though copycatting culture is to some extent impelled by commercial operations, it is in essence a cultural phenomenon. Copycatting culture is endearing itself to the masses and the dominant community through imitating, pasting, or even spoofing the popular brands or elite culture programs with some adoptions and creation. This research tries to analyze it from the perspective of Bakhtin's carnival theory to exploit the carnival features in copycatting culture and to resolve the discourse campaign and cultural identity of copycatting culture as a folk culture.

Key words: Copycatting Culture, Carnival Theory, folk culture, Discourse Power

1. INTRODUCTION

From copycatting products to copycatting culture, the Chinese “copycatting phenomenon” is bearing more and more cultural values which have been explored by scholars from various viewpoints. Though copycatting culture is initially impelled by commercial operations, it is in essence a cultural phenomenon. It is endearing itself to the masses and the dominant community through imitating, pasting, or spoofing the popular brands or elite culture programs with some adoptions and innovations. This research tries to analyze copycatting culture from the perspective of Bakhtin’s carnival theory to exploit the carnival features beneath it and to decode the underlying discourse campaign for cultural identity of copycatting culture as a folk culture.

2. COPYCATTING CULTURE IN BRIEF

The word “Shan Zhai” (a Chinese Pinyin for Copycatting) was in the first instance borrowed from Cantonese to refer in particular to the territories and places occupied by villains, outlaws and rebels where they reigned and administered in a way to show their protests and revolts against the authorities. But recently, it was employed as an umbrella name for the products which were copied, cloned or imitated from the contemporary popular brands or commodities, especially the electronics, such as mobile phones, digital cameras, MP3s, etc. With a similar but misleading appearance and a fraudulent name to obscure the differences with the salable products, Shan Zhai products are becoming more and more popular and attractive for their multifunctional traits, good quality and low price, for instance, Nokir for Nokia, Samsing for Samsung, Suny-Erriccsun for Sony-Erickson. And then it has evolved and penetrated into the cultural circle as a sort of subculture by means of copycatting, mocking, imitating or spoofing the mainstream, authoritative culture, the so-called copycatting culture. It is said that it sprung up in 2008 marked by the emergence of copycatting stars, copycatting media works beginning with the video *A Murder Case Caused by a Piece of Steamed Bread* (Net.1.) made by a young man named Hu Ge, who is now a network celebrity and has created many copycatting video programs, including the copycatting News Broadcast program. After that, copycatting videos became rampant, among which the copycatting Spring Festival Gala Evening is the most impressive one. Table 1 is a list of them (Net.2.).

The cultural copycatting is more than material but rather spiritual, characterized by anti-authority, anti-official, carnival, deconstruction, anti-reasoning, where social mentality, aesthetic orientation, the reconstruction of modern value are implanted. It is now the main force of copycatting in China because it foreshows the advent of a new era of nationwide copycatting phenomenon. On the one hand, copycatting is exerting increasing pressure on the mainstream culture; meanwhile it is confronted with severe counterattacks from the orthodox authority. But Chinese copycatting culture is now an inescapable and unavoidable occurrence; it is related

with everyone in one way or another. Hence, it is worthy of the great efforts made to decipher it from various points of view.

Table 1 Copycatting Products

Category Year	Cultural Copycatting Events	Copycatting Commodity	
2008	Copycatting News Broadcast, Copycatting Olympic Torch Relay, Copycatting version “Say a word in heart”, Copycatting “Lecture Room”, Copycatting Nobel Prize, “Copycatting City” network, Copycatting Spring Festival Gala Evening, etc.	Clothes/ Shoes	HIKE, ADIDOS, PAMA, 李明, etc.
		Food/ Drink	康帅傅, 巴星克、旺子牛奶、丑粮液、Cole, etc.
2009	Copycatting “World of War craft”, Copycatting TV play, Copycatting Poems, etc.	Electronics	Panasonic, IBM, SQNY, microseft, Nokia, etc.

3. CARNIVAL AND CARNIVALIZATION

Carnival theory is in short a theory of carnival, subculture and folk culture. Bakhtin is no doubt a master of carnival and folk culture, who effortlessly constructs his theory by a thorough and painstaking study on Rabelais and Dostoevsky and their compositions rather than a barren air castle without realistic foundations. Due to Bakhtin’s inconsistent writing style, carnival theory is illuminated in many of his works, running trough his whole life, but mainly elaborated in *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*. Scattered as it is, the motifs of his carnival theory are discerned by scholars, namely, carnival, carnival sense of the world and carnivalization. They represent the cores of Bakhtin’s carnival theory, symbolizing the three stages of the building process. One point worthy of noting is that the three components are inseparable and organically coalesced together. It can be graphed roughly in figure 1.

Among them, carnivalization plays a decisive role in Bakhtin’s carnival theory because it is a sublimation of the other two components. Bakhtin proposes the concept based on his primitive study on the carnival life and his dialogical genre theory. To better understand the ancient dialogical genre, Bakhtin returns to its sources, the Serio-comical, through which he gives the notion of carnivalized literature, “that was influenced – directly and without meditation, or indirectly, through a series of intermediate links – by one or another variant of carnivalistic

folklore (ancient or medieval)” (1929/1984: 107). He believes that the serio-comical is the first example of such literature; the typical ones are Socratic dialogue and Menippea.

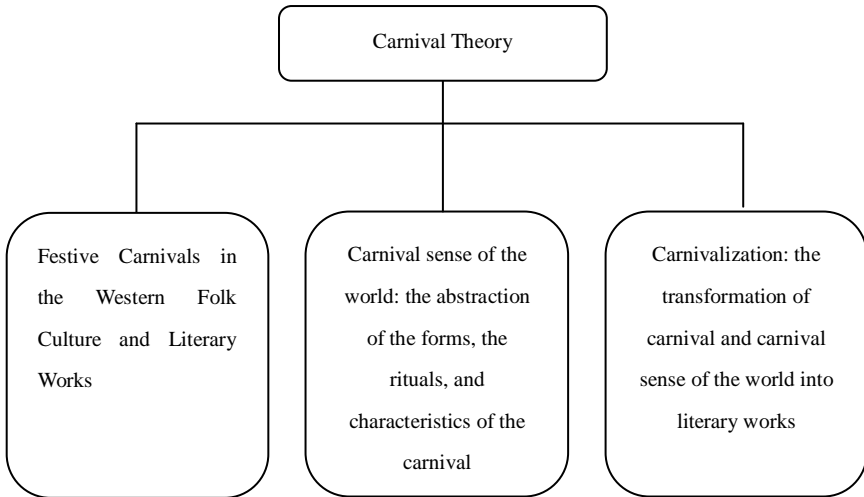


Figure 1 The Structure of Carnival Theory

Carnivalization plays an important role in the history of literature. Bakhtin states that carnivalization helps to shape new genres. It not only determines the content of the medieval literary composition but still the generic foundations of a work. In Bakhtin’s (1929/1984: 131) words, “carnivalization becomes a purely literary tradition.” In *Rabelais and His world*, Bakhtin explores from his study on the culture of folk humor in the middle age and Rabelais’s works another carnivalized literary form, the grotesque realism. In grotesque realism, the material body is deeply positive; fools, jesters, cheaters are the main characters; the essential principle is degradation. This literary form permeates the whole renaissance age.

As for the relationship among them, Bakhtin’s (1929/1984: 131-134) states that “the source of carnivalization is carnival itself,” ... and “the clamping principle that bound all these heterogeneous elements into an organic whole of a genre ... was carnival and a carnival sense of the world.” That is to say, carnival is the foundation for Bakhtin’s carnival theory. It offers him the materials and sparkles to develop a new genre for literature composition. But literature can’t be carnival only, and vice versa. Bakhtin is so brilliant that he creates the carnival sense of the world to abstract all the similarities and commonness in carnival. The advantages of carnival sense of the world are magnificent, because it makes carnivalization possible which in turn returns to carnival and carnival sense of the world. So, carnival is the sources for the carnival sense of the world and literary carnivalization. The relationship can be illustrated in the following diagram (Song 2008: 38).

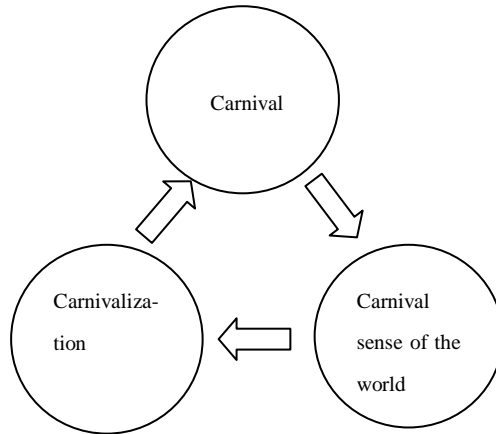


Figure 2 The Relationship among the Components of Carnival Theory

To be specific, after a thorough exploration of the carnival tradition in the western culture, especially his analysis on Rabelais and his works, the Renaissance and its literary achievements, Bakhtin catches one of the permanent motifs in them, that is, the festive carnival in folk culture. Then, he concludes the categories and characteristics of the carnival, based on which he forms the concept of the carnival sense of the world. When the carnival and carnival sense of the world are transformed into literary works, it is called carnivalization. The three components are linked as an integrative theory. As is noted that it begins from carnival, but no end is found. They circulate from one to the other.

4. ANALYSIS OF COPYCATTING CULTURE

Copycatting culture is so complicated that it may be impossible to cover every aspect of it. In the following section, we will make use of Bakhtin's carnival theory to explore the carnival spirits embedded in it and the characteristics of copycatting culture.

4.1 Copycatting Culture as Festive Carnival

Bakhtin takes carnival as a second life of the people who behave subversively, speaks carnivalized language, and make carnival laughter on the carnival square where carnival acts are performed; carnival feasts are held; carnival fire is blazing; social hierarchy is broken; where all the people are equal to talk. In a word, carnival is life different from reality, a reaction towards the temporal society.

The language of the copycatting culture is typically carnivalized. Copycatting from the very beginning is the imitation of the popular brands of electronics by changing some of the letters or characters of the original names. For example, they change the famous mobile phone brand

Nokia into Nokio or N0kia to attract the consumer's attention. Similar instances are Hike for Nike, SQNY for Sony, Cole for Cola, etc. This is the cradle for the carnivalization of the language in the latter copycatting culture. Here we just choose some pieces of the videos to show the carnivalization of the language in the copycatting culture. Obviously the language they use in the copycatting culture programs are spoken in a way in which the normal language rules are vibrated, challenging the general laws of language. They recombine the words with different dialects mixed together. And still they are likely to blend characters with photos, numbers, letters, pinning, and symbols to express meaning, with ungrammatical constructions, compounding, or even wrong words concurrent in the same sentence or utterance. Another character is that they often alter famous poems, songs or proverbs for purpose of sarcasm or amusement. An instance is the copycatting cultural program which is called *Say a Word in Heart*. The lyrics are:

say a word in heart say a word in heart I think my home too often think my mother
is white in hair say a word in heart I have love too often think a sleep her a sleep
her come~come ~~but became a soldier lai~~~~~I know duty is big you don't
carry gun I don't carry gun who guard our mom who come guard her who come
guard her!

(Net.2.)

In the video, the author uses the tune of a well-known army song “Shuo Ju Xin Li Hua” which originally means “To Tell You the True” or “Something from the Bottom of My Heart”, but translates it word by word as “Say a word in heart”, whereas the background music is absurd and transplanted from the popular movie *Forrest Gump*. It is obvious that the lyrics are ungrammatical, or it's totally a word for word translation with a blending of the Pinyin of Chinese characters. One more magnificent feature of the language is that the content of the copycatting is full of curses, parody, intimate languages. Unlike the mainstream cultural programs, they speak very degradedly, using the “bad words”, “vulgar expressions”, such as piss, defecation, vituperation, etc. We take the famous copycatting News Broadcasting program made by Hu Ge (Net.3.) as example. Generally, the formal News Broadcast program needs to be official, formal, and serious. But in the copycatting News Broadcast program, the names for the protagonists are “×××”; The so-called topic for the news is about dejection for the hobos in a cheap renting house; expressions like “expansion of the domestic needs”, “employment” which are generally the concerns of the government are now the topics in a cheap renting house; network addiction becomes an illness that they are willing to cure.

Overall, the language in the copycatting culture programs becomes carnivalized, just like what is described in *Rabelais and His World* by Bakhtin (1941/1984: 420), “the more unofficial and familiar the speech, the more often and substantially are those tones combined, the less distinct is the line dividing praise and abuse.” The carnivalized language in copycatting serves to

express the carnival sense of the world, because language is power, language constructs identity and ethnicity. As a consequence, language helps constructs ideology. (see Fairclough 1989, 1993, Talbot, Atkinson and Atkinson 2003) Carnivalized language establishes its own language community, self-identity and ideology. It evidently manifests the carnival character of copycatting culture, and it plays a vital role in our analysis.

The copycatting culture is imbued with carnival laughter, which is the most important concept and component in Bakhtin's carnival theory. Bakhtin differentiates the official culture from the unofficial by his description on the carnival laughter. He (Bakhtin 1941/1984: 11) summarizes the three complex features of carnival laughter. First of all, carnival laughter is the laughter of all the people. Second, it is universal in scope, directed to all the people, including the participants in them. Third, carnival laughter is ambivalent, for it not only asserts but also denies, it buries and revives. In the copycatting culture, all the participants make carnival laughter from the bottom of their heart, using the unconventional language, holding activities that in real life could only be done by the rich, the stars, or the government in an equal social position. In the copycatting Spring Festival Gala Evening (Net.4.) and the Copycatting News program (Net.5.), all the participants laugh not at themselves but at the performances itself. Contorted human body, exaggerated countenances and masks, amusing actions, adding the pungent mock at the social reality are the main fuel for the carnival laughter in the copycatting. But it is significant to catch hold of the ambivalence nature of the laughter in the copycatting programs. On the one hand, the laughter is a denial of the social life because they find it hard to make them heard or expressed in the normal way. They have no better vehicles to change the situation or even to relieve the frustrations they are faced up with. As for them, nothing can be done but to laugh in the copycatting programs. On the other hand, the laughter is triumphant, because they have after all found a platform for them to revel, that is, the copycatting; even though it is transient and not real.

The main arena for copycatting culture is the square or the platform and is chiefly transmitted through the internet where young men are the main participants. These two characters help to shape the carnival nature of the copycatting culture. Square as the main battlefield in the middle age carnival is a significant choice for the development of the carnival where the dreams of being treated equally of the jesters, fools, clowns and civilians come true, so is the copycatting culture. The square permits all the people no matter what he or she is doing to enter into the play without any restrictions. It's open to everyone. In the copycatting Spring Festival Gala Evening, all the players of the Gala are selected equally in public. Anyone who is versatile and passionate has equal opportunity to give performance at the gala. One reason that accounts for the rapid transition is due to the wide spreading of the internet and high-tech and the participation of the young people.

To sum up, copycatting culture is "a second life, a second world of folk culture ..., a parody of the extra-carnival life, a 'world inside out'." (Bakhtin 1941/1984: 11) It has most of the features

that Bakhtin's carnival has. It is a carnival full of carnival laughter held on the square or at the platform mainly by the young people. It shares almost all the components of that in Bakhtin's carnival in the middle age. Copycatting has turned into a carnival.

4.2 Carnival Sense of the World in Copycatting Culture

First of all, copycatting culture is a culture in which all the participants are free and familiar to contact with each other without any restrictions and limitations. Copycatting is primarily created by an imitation of the mainstream culture where the social order is clearly cut, where people live in a strict social rank, where the main voice is given by the higher social class, where the lower class people are repressed from the centre. Therefore the contact among people is confined within a single social layer and the intercourse across the existent social hierarchy is impossible. But in copycatting culture, everything old and absurd is subverted and reconstructed, as in the copycatting Spring Festival Gala Evening, all the players are selected from the grass root class apart from the hosts. They are not governed by the government, particular to the popular stars. There is no difference in social position, equal to everyone. The people in the program are in a festive carnival, having temporarily forgotten the border and gap in real life. So they share a free contact with each other, a carnival sense of the world.

And then, copycatting features eccentricity. Based on Bakhtin (1929/1984: 123), eccentricity "permits in concretely sensuous form, the latent sides of human nature to reveal and express themselves." Copycatting is rooted primordially in the marginal market, far away from the center of the city because they are turned down by giant markets and the mainstream consumers, hence no legal identity. They are just grass-rooted products ignored and repressed by the majority, plodding along the higher consumptive community, struggling for recognition. But unfortunately, up till now, most of the copycatting products could only take up the rural markets and peripheral consumer community with the popular brands occupying the mainstreaming consumption share. The copycatting cultural programs are confronted with the same complexion, for instance, the Spring Festival Gala Evening, the News Broadcast, the Lecture Room, especially the copycatting stars are all marginal voices to fight for their own identity against the oppression from the mainstream media and cultural discourse, in other words, the center of power and the cultural hegemony. They want to shift the situation and challenge the center.

Third, misalliance is the chief way in copycatting. Copycatting is imitation, but it is neither plagiarism nor a pure copy of the original but rather a mixture of hodgepodge. In the copycatting culture, especially in the cultural programs, the participants are composed of different social layer: it may include "popular stars", farmers, "high officials", the unilateral, the educated, the old and the young. It is a world where up and down, old and new, rich and poor, authorities and citizens, the sacred and the vulgar mix together, which can be well illustrated in the copycatting torch relay and the copycatting amusement programs. In Hu Ge's

News Broadcast, there are the government officials, the lay-about, community leaders, common residents, master-at-arms and rascals. Among the copycatting novel prize winners (Net.6.), there are Zhou Zhenglong, the winner of the Nobel Prize in Biology who discovered the extinguished Hua Nan Tiger; Zhao Lihua, the winner of Nobel Prize in Literature who created a new literature genre called Rika Style; Xu Dianqing, the winner of Nobel Prize in Economics who meets his promise that he will apologize to the readers if the price of the housing price declines one percent, and so many others. Therefore, we can find that copycatting culture has become a carnival where people of all social orders meet and revel together.

Finally, profanation is the principal purpose of copycatting culture. Bakhtin (1929/1984: 123) defines profanation as “a whole system of carnivalistic debasing and bringing down to earth; carnivalistic obscenities linked with the reproductive power of the earth and the body, carnivalistic parodies on sacred texts and sayings, etc.” It is a process of degrading, lowering the lofty, but glorifying the shallow. The purpose of carnival is evident here, not for fun but for parody. Copycatting culture is to mock on the hegemony in the dominant culture and to scramble for discourse power, for profanation is to use the sacred in a sacrilegious way, to desecrate the upper and official and push up the lower and the weak in order to sneer at the obsolete and stale orthodox. In copycatting culture, the “stars” are not real stars but the folk handicraft men; the Nobel Prize winners are not real scientists and meanwhile they actually haven’t achieved breakthrough in science but some ordinary findings or even the common sense, such as the findings of the copycatting Nobel Prize winners. Copycatting culture by virtue serves to blaspheme the mainstream culture to fight for its own recognition.

4.3 Copycatting as Subculture

Bakhtin (1941/1984: 3-5) summarizes that Rabelais’ image are completely at home within the thousand-year-old development of popular culture, to understand Rabelais, we need to explore the in depth of the tradition of folk humor. He also divides the manifestations of folk culture into three distinct forms, namely, ritual spectacles, comic verbal compositions and various genres of billingsgate. He then in the book *Rabelais and His World* studies in detail the Rabelais’s composition and the middle age folk culture. So, one can concludes that Bakhtin’s carnival theory is essentially a theory of cultural theory, a folk culture or subculture theory.

Copycatting culture is most magnificently and ultimately reflected through carnivalized language and carnival laughter in them. So now, we know that language in copycatting is not regular language. It is ungrammatical but logical, because it conveys meaning. They are coined by adding new meaning to the old words or by changing parts of the classical quotations to express an opposite meaning. For example, “Da Xia” which originally means a kind of shrimp means internet master-hand; “Lai Dian” which originally means the switching-on of electricity but now it means the affection between lovers. Linguistically, the language can be regarded as an anti-language which is firstly discussed by the famous linguist M. A. K. Halliday (1976) in

the magazine *American Anthropologist*, which is then collected in *Language as Social Semiotic* (1978). He studies the language of “pelting speech” in Elizabethan period and the “grypserka” language in jails in Poland and he concludes that anti-language constructs an-society which is the substitute of the mainstream society, a declaration of rebellion. Hodge and Kress (1973: 71) elaborate from the perspective of language and ideology the way how anti-language is formed. Ding (2009) summarizes that anti-language as social semiotic is parasitic and metaphoric, an important way to maintain subjectivity and the identity of anti-society. Very surprisingly, they are almost the same as copycatting culture language. They are all created by cut and paste, blending or adapting the classics. So, the language in copycatting culture is a kind of anti-language.

Copycatting cultural language, the same as anti-language, for one thing, constructs anti-reality and anti-society, and for another opposes to the official language and the mainstream culture. Hirschkop and Shepherd (1989/2001) explains that if each language is a voice, then society is a welter of different ideologies, it embodies not only a perspective but a set of values and desires. Because “all language of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objectives, meanings and values” (Bakhtin 1981: 291-292). As a result, two contradictory forces come into being: centrifugal forces and centripetal forces. Centrifugal forces make things different from each other, drive things away from the unification and the center. While centripetal forces strive for things together, closer to the center and emphasize unification and sameness. However, centrifugal forces requires movements, keep distance to the center, but in favor of becoming, changing and new life, while centripetal forces long for stasis, resist becoming, abhor revolution, maintain the traditional rules, scared of diversity, and desire for the seamless quiet of death. Centripetal force requires univocalization and monologue in opposition to polyphony and dialogue, “permeates the entire system of language and forces it towards unification and standardization; ... purges literary language of all traces dialect and substandard linguistic elements and allows only one idiom to exist” (Lachmann, Eshelman and Davis 1988-1989: 116). The carnivalized language in copycatting culture is not standard language, full of blending of dialects and the recomposed elevated language; therefore it belongs to the centrifugal forces. And what the copycatting culture opposes is the dominant lineal culture which is of course the centripetal force. Copycatting is born in the remote corner, far away from the city proper and mainstream community, whether the early copycatting products or the subsequent copycatting cultural products. They are so much repressed that they are not satisfied with the monopoly of the dominant merchants and the single voice of the formal culture so that they want to be heard and acknowledged by the masses. But they are too weak to alter the status quo as a consequence they have to ally to form to a new society and world to resist the threats from the authority and protect them. Up till now, copycatting hasn't broken through the net of the repulsion of the dominant culture; they are wandering in the margin. But copycatting

culture has turned into at least a kind of anti-culture, or even, anti-society, subject to the dominant culture, hence, a sort of marginal culture.

As folk culture, copycatting culture has all the characteristics of it. Bakhtin believes that the folk culture in the medieval Europe differs from the serious official, ecclesiastical, feudal, and political cult forms and ceremonials. It offers a completely different, nonofficial, extra-ecclesiastical and extra-political aspect of the world, of man, and of human relations. It is a second world and a second life outside officialdom. Copycatting culture is the second world and second life created by the grassroots and the weak to experience a new life which is different from the current tradition and aesthetic standards. In copycatting Spring Festival Gala Evening, it is a new public carnival square, all the performers live a happy but different life where there is no political oppression, social order, language standards. As Fiske (2001) points out that it offers the participants a chance to break the routine of daily life, to make the oppressed heard; it offers all the people the opportunity to accept the happiness which is once suppressed and denied by themselves.

In a word, copycatting culture is a kind of folk culture. It has its own language that features the same as that in the anti-language, which in turn forms into a new world and culture. Copycatting culture is an opposite strength towards the mainstream values, eager for its own identity and recognition.

5. CHARACTERISTICS OF COPYCATTING CULTURE TESTED BY THE CARNIVAL THEORY

Hoy (1992: 765) comments that “Mikhail Bakhtin is acknowledged in increasingly wide circles as a sensitive observer of popular culture in its sociohistorical context.” It is reasonable to apply it to unscramble the new-born copycatting culture. From the analysis above, it can be concluded that copycatting culture is a carnival of the people, by the people, and for the people if analyzed from the perspective of the Bakhtin’s carnival theory; it has most of the components of the carnival in Rabelais and the middle age, and still it incarnates the carnival sense of the world and becomes into a sort of subculture or folk culture. So, what are the main characteristics of this folk culture?

5.1 Universal Carnival

Firstly, copycatting culture is a universal carnival. From copycatting commodity to copycatting cultural products, copycatting is a festive carnival for the grass roots or the masses. It meets the requirements of the lower class people, rejecting the monopoly and hegemony of the dominant value and ideology. All the participants in copycatting world successfully break the existing rules, rituals, taboos and social order, and they are the subjects of the carnival and share equal discourse power. In the “second life”, the copycatting carnival square provides the universalism character possible. It is not a closed system; it is open to everyone. The laughter in copycatting

means a lot. It is on the one hand to express the happiness that they haven't experienced in real life, but it is still to sneer at the so-called modern order and civilization. Shan (1999: 632) summarizes that Bakhtin endows carnival with the strength to campaign with the official ideology and elite culture. The carnival square, the carnival laughter and exaggerated human body go far beyond the sphere of aesthetics and have a political-cultural meaning. Carnival is an emancipated world, full of supreme happiness and hope. To understand the deep meaning of the universal carnival of copycatting culture, the social context should be taken into consideration. Recently, with the rapid development of market economy, commodity is growing more and more collective; as a result, monopoly has come into being. The petty commodities can't occupy enough market shares to survive, so they are ignored and suppressed. The same story happens in the cultural field. Mainstream culture becomes more and stronger so that a cultural hegemony appears. Consequently, the weak community or the grass-root culture has no chance to be heard by the high culture, and the communication stops. Copycatting makes the communication possible, because copycatting is carnival, a universal carnival. Just as Cheng (2001: 224) concludes that carnival theory embodies a spirit of equal dialogism, a spirit of subrogation and rebirth, a philosophy of happiness for the demos. It is the call to communicate that makes copycatting culture a carnival and a carnivalized anti-culture, or subculture. Of course, the call echoes with a prosperity of the copycatting culture in recent years, and still it is alarming, stronger and stronger.

5.2 Ambivalence

This is the most significant feature for copycatting culture. When copycatting becomes into a carnival, it is ambivalent, because "the carnival is far distant from the negative and formal parody of modern times. Folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time. "Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture" (Bakhtin 1941/1984: 11). The ambivalent nature of carnival makes copycatting culture ambivalent. To be specific, copycatting culture are not satisfied with the existing social and cultural status in quo. The hegemony in markets and in culture makes every communication mute, the voice single, and the monologue rampant, while dialogue impossible. As a result, the gap and gulf between the high culture and the low culture grows wider and wider, to the extent which has provided the copycatting culture futile soil to breed from the crack. Then it gradually grows up into a subculture. So, copycatting culture denies the current order, laughs at the stilted rules, degrades the sacred. Aftermath, "that once-taboo topics like sex and death can be treated with such hilarity during the carnival", and it can be even worse, "not just of the carnivalesque reduction of all cultural sublimations to their folkloric roots, ...but the desecration of all that a culture considers 'sacred' or meaningful to nothing more than another of the merry rogue's clown's clownish jests" (Hoy 1992: 774). For example, in copycatting News Broadcast, some of the students coronate and become governments officials, meanwhile some of them are degraded into thieves and criminals. And still the topics for the "officials" are about the toilet cleaning and the network addiction. This is

a denial and subversion of the so-called social rituals and taboos. Therefore copycatting is the end of the old order.

But copycatting is not only about death and denial. Bakhtin “insists on an interplay of dialogues between what any given system will admit as literature, or ‘high culture,’ ... and all those texts excluded from these definitions as nonliterature, or ‘low culture,’ popular culture, or subculture” (Hoy, 1992: 765-766). Copycatting culture on the other hand is rebirth and renewal of the existing culture. Copycatting is not rigid imitation or pure plagiarism; on the contrary, it is a kind of creation. It pierces through the hegemony of dominant culture, with a new face joining in the fighting. It’s a second life outside of the world for the participants where there are no spectators or footlights on a new square with a distinctive spiritual pursuit and values. It is the ambivalent nature that makes copycatting culture survive and prosper.

5.3 Utopian Ideality

Coates (1998: 127) proposes that “carnival is seen by Bakhtin to address a primarily state of humankind.” This has much to do with Bakhtin’s social context and his personal misadventure as well as the social background of the middle age. The carnival is the only place where equality, freedom and belief are realized. Clark and Holquist (1984: 297) think that Bakhtin “is exploring the interface between a stasis imposed from above and a desire for change from below, between old and new, official and unofficial”. But it is impossible for him to realize his dreams to dialogue with the official. So does the copycatting culture. It roots from the marginal markets for the purpose of pursuing more profits by imitating, prevails with the help of the commercial propaganda and the internet. When it spreads into cultural field, copycatting performance is dependent on the dominant cultural programs, values, and ideology. Copycatting is just the way that the grass roots fight with the high culture, the way they express their idea. The conflict between copycatting culture and the mainstream culture is going on. “Though the victory on the mainstream culture is short and strictly restricted, it makes happiness among the masses, because the happiness is social and political” (Fiske 1989: 2). But it is only a utopian ideality. It can’t isolate completely from the dominant culture, instead it will be ultimately assimilated or annexed by the high culture.

6. ATTITUDES TOWARDS COPYCATTING CULTURE

Copycatting culture has integrated into our life, but it is still immersed into disputes among different communities. What attitudes should we take towards copycatting culture?

Copycatting is accused of piracy when emerged. But one can’t take it simply as pure copy, for the creation and adaptation must be taken into consideration. Amazingly, some of them have grown up into popular brands or important culture programs. We should respect and help the promising copycatting culture to make them serve the people, because they are folk culture, reflecting the needs and requirements of the grass-root society. Surely, it is changing the

hegemony of the mainstream culture and mirrors the deficiency of the dominant ideology, but meanwhile it remedies the insufficiency of modern culture. It is of great importance to realize the social significance of copycatting culture.

On the other hand, copycatting culture is still young, and it has to be faced up with the strong resistance from the mainstream culture and many temptations from commercial exploitations, even though it has the potential and strength to win more and more market share and disciples. As a result, the territory and reign of the dominant culture are confronted with so much menace and challenging so that they will no doubt spare no efforts to protect the hegemony they created and inhibit the growth of the copycatting culture. Therefore, it is still a long way to go before they occupy the dominant consumptive community and catch the attention of the higher class people. So, we need to protect copycatting culture and guide it to grow up into a healthy folk culture.

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