

# Carnival Theoretical Analysis of the Bullet Screen Participation and Bilibili

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## ABSTRACT

With the development and advancement of technology and information, as well as the improvement and expansion of network functions, bullet screen function has been more and more commonly used. Bullet screen is an instant interactive text comment embedded in a video and scrolling along with it. With its unique mode of communication and commentary, it has attracted the attention of young people in cyberspace and set off a bullet-screen comments frenzy. This paper aims to analyse the cultural dynamics of the popularity of bullet screen culture and reveal its audience psychology and cultural significance. To achieve this goal, this paper uses Bakhtin's carnival theory and the Bilibili bullet-screen corpus as a basis to analyse the reasons for the popularity and expanding trend of bullet-screen comments from the perspective of individual and group youth audiences.

**Keywords:** Barrage culture, Carnival theory, Audience psychology

## 1. INTRODUCTION

With the development and progress of technological information, the virtual cyberspace has formed a second world for people to socialise, and the functions of cyberspace are constantly being improved and innovated to meet people's psychological and emotional needs. In this environment, the function of intercepting the net was born. Barrage was originally a military term that originally meant intensive artillery bombardment with large or small numbers of artillery pieces. It is now used in video broadcasting to refer to a text commentary embedded in a video for instant interaction. The comments float over the video, like a curtain formed by too many bullets in a flying shooter. A new mode of commenting, bullet-screen comments were introduced to China in 2008 from the video site AcFun. In recent years, it has continued to evolve and enter the public eye, gaining popularity with the public for its unique mode of interactive communication, forming the barrage carnival.

At present, research on barrage focuses on the following aspects: exploring the characteristics of barrage in use, for example, Bai Yizhuo argues through textual analysis that barrage language is characterised by fragmentation and synchronicity; exploring the cultural productivity of barrage, and studying the interaction between barrage culture and popular culture based on the subcultural characteristics and popularisation process of

barrage culture.[1] Some researches are on the relevant influences of barrage culture. For example, Mi Shuhan states the negative functions of the barrage carnival in a virtual environment through observation.[2] These studies have made certain analyses of the connotations and influences of the barrage from different perspectives, but they all lack an exploration of the reasons for the popularity of the barrage through the audience. This paper will take Bakhtin's carnival theory as the basis and combine it with the corpus of barrage in the barrage network to examine the cultural motives of the popularity of barrage from the perspective of audience psychology. The carnival theory, proposed by the famous Soviet literary theorist and critic Bakhtin, runs through the three key words carnival, carnivalesque and carnivalization, which can be characterised by ethnicity, ritualism and subversion. [3] The spirit of carnival is the essence of carnival theory, which is people's unique feeling of the world, including the spirit of equal and free dialogue and the spirit of alternation and change. [4]

Based on the above illustrations, this paper, therefore, will divide into two separate sections, separately investigating the characteristics of the barrage and examining the cultural motives behind the popularity of the barrage. The first section will demonstrate the reasons why young people are willing to let off steam from the perspective of the individual audience, and apply the second world carnival theory and carnival characteristics

to interpret the individual emotions, self-presentation and re-creation of mainstream culture of young people who let off steam; the second section will find out the reason for the expanding popularity trend of letting off steam from the perspective of the group, and analyse the participation and emotional intimacy of the audience in the letting off steam carnival based on the carnival spirit.

## **2. THE SUBVERSIVE SECOND LIFE IN A CARNIVAL ATMOSPHERE—— INDIVIDUAL REASONS FOR THE POPULARITY OF BULLET SCREEN CULTURE**

Barrage as a instant reviews and interactive text in video, it with its synchronic and interactivity to their audiences to build the atmosphere of a "virtual" present, and because of the barrage of youth groups after more than participants in the 90 s, they are more suitable for online social way to show themselves, express ideas and emotions. Therefore, the popularity of bullet subtitles is closely related to the emotional interaction, self-presentation and re-creation of mainstream culture of young people.

### ***2.1. Two-way emotional interaction***

Language and characters carry individual emotions. Bullet screen, as a language with strong interaction and real time, can express individual emotions in the form of fast scrolling video. Therefore, individuals can release bullet screen bearing their own emotions to get emotional catharsis and psychological satisfaction. In the existing barrage, there are emotional barrage specially expressing the individual feeling of clarity, such as the "tearful eye" that appears when there is a touching plot. "23333" and "hahahahaha" are expressions of joy and joy. In the cartoon King Rank, which was introduced to B station in October 2021, the screen was almost full of touching bullet screen "broken by netizens" when the plot of the protagonist's growth after suffering appeared. With the help of the concept of "carnival" in Bakhtin's carnival theory, we can explore the satisfaction of bullet screen for individual emotional output. "Carnival" is a folk celebration activities, carnival people singing and laughing, fighting, full of happiness and passion of life Bakhtin's poetics[5]. When netizens to barrage released on fast, and the rolling barrage wave is, in fact, will himself into the similar carnival atmosphere, with the help of a barrage built up similar carnival square platforms, with a relaxed and open ways of expressing your feelings, and with the help of a carnival atmosphere resolve personal anxiety, physical and mental pleasure. Therefore, bullet screen provides a place for individuals to vent their emotions by constructing a virtual communication platform.

Based on the network, bullet-screenbuilds a communication platform with the nature of carnival square, which can not only realize the emotional output of individuals, but also give individuals the opportunity to communicate emotionally across time and space. The synchrony and interactivity of bullet screen make it easy for the audience to create an environment of "quasi-synchronous presence". As a form of which has the function of comment text, barrage more on video one point in the plot or details, and the mechanism of displays comment can be made in different times but around unified plot comments barrage displayed on the screen at the same time barrage of interactive research[6], it is a "quasi synchronicity", It makes people feel that there are many people present with them when they post bullets, so as to get a feeling of dialogue and form a kind of "shallow social interaction". Bakhtin's carnival theory describes the "second world" of carnival, that is, the world completely reversed with the reality of the "first world", is the public carnival square. In this carnival square type world, people can break through class and identity, and carry out a kind of casual and intimate communication thinking on bullet screen phenomenon based on carnival theory[7]. Under the condition of quasi-synchronism of bullet screen, the audience releasing bullet screen is equivalent to entering the virtual "second world", breaking through the boundary of time and space, entering and exiting more freely, and obtaining a sense of identity and belonging accompanied by others through brief but intimate communication with netizens who share the same hobbies

On the one hand, individuals in this carnival square can express their emotions through bullet screen, express their own views and psychology, obtain the recognition of others and strengthen their self-recognition; On the other hand, individuals can also get emotional resonance by watching others' bullets and integrate their own emotions into the flowing wave of bullets, so as to better perceive the existence of others and feel similar emotional input. Therefore, bullet screen can realize two-way interaction of individual emotion and meet individual emotional and social needs.

### ***2.2. Self-presentation of youth***

As a new form of comment, bullet screen is mostly composed of the post-90s and post-00s generation. As the new generation of youth, they grow up in a diversified social background, and are more inclusive and pursue the presentation of their own personalities. In the released barrage, there are a considerable amount of barrage mainly of greeting types, typical of which are "time + punch", "XXX people come to report", "xx" and "Hello, friends in front!". From the release of such barrage, we can analyze the self-presentation of young individuals when they release barrage. Different from the groups in the 1970s and 1980s, the new generation of young people are more from nuclear families or trunk families perspective

and guidance of bullet screen cultural production [8]. The "small family" mode makes them prone to loneliness, more individualistic thoughts, and hope to get the right to speak and recognition of their own existence. However, in traditional media, the right to speak is given to a few people with power, while the voices of ordinary people are often deprived expression of youth's right to speak in the age of new media[9]. Bakhtin's carnival theory points out that in the real society all levels, privileges, norms and systems are absolutely fixed and invariable, while in the carnival, everything has relativity and duality. Barrage is the freedom of openness and mutual subjectivity, nationwide virtual sex fit the carnival, the characteristics of the spirit of ritual and equal dialogue, constitute the second life of youth, youth using a barrage can break the bondage of identity, do not need to succumb to the so-called mainstream concept, can defend their position, their comments and opinions [10]. So when the younger generation watches videos. More willing to leave their own mark through bullet screen, let more people see themselves, enhance the presentation of self. Therefore, the bullet screen discourse mentioned above fully reflects the psychological state that young people wish to present themselves and interact with others when releasing bullet screen.

### ***2.3. The re-creation of mainstream culture***

In addition to the expression of emotion and self-presentation, bullet screen has a special form -- the adaptation and re-creation of mainstream culture is also the reason why bullet screen is loved by young people. Here, the bullet screen in the four famous TV dramas in STATION B is analyzed as an example. Is often the audience from the characters in the video, lines, movement, or expressions were found in some subtle details, in the form of a barrage to interpret the characters' inner thoughts, such as B stand 5 sets of the romance of three kingdoms "he drank chop huaxiong" ten eight-channel leud lombardi as champions arise against dong zhuo, dong zhuo send yong will face, huaxiong satrap evan to lombardi states: "I have General Pan Feng, who can cut Hua Xiong." As a result, Pan Feng is beheaded by Hua Xiong. The audience stands in pan Feng's Angle to recommend han Fu to ridicule "I thank you "[8]. Some audience also blended modern elements into the original lines. For example, in the first episode of Journey to the West in station B, The Monkey King Came out, When Zhen Yuanzi taught Sun Wukong the way, he asked him what fairy art he wanted to learn, and the bullet screen was filled with modern subject knowledge, such as "C language programming", "biology" and "jurisprudence". In Bakhtin's opinion, carnival has four categories of connotation, including: 1) people of different levels and classes can break the hierarchical barriers in the square to have intimate contact and create an atmosphere of equality and freedom; 2) Challenge the authority of the official hierarchy with gags on Bakhtin's carnival theory[10].

What this reflects is a kind of unofficial, non - literary form, a kind of subversive spirit dispelling authority. Barrage of mainstream culture adaptation and recreate embodies the user of the mainstream culture, the mainstream values of subversion and deconstruction, barrage use audience spread by joking words, relaxed and funny jokes, constantly on video text processing and reorganization, the value of the audience and the tendency in the second creation. In the second creation of the classic works, the individual thoughts of the young people are reflected, showing the young people's psychology of seeking for difference and enriching their hearts.

## **3. UNIVERSAL PARTICIPATION AND THE INNER SPIRIT OF CARNIVAL—GROUP REASONS FOR THE EXPANSION OF THE POPULAR TREND OF BULLET SCREEN CULTURE**

The popularity of bullet screen is not overnight, is the result of many years of application. However, its popularity trend has not weakened over time, but gradually developed from the internal two-dimensional websites to live broadcasting platforms and major video websites and entered the public horizon. The expansion of the popularity trend of bullet screen pop culture is closely related to the promotion of the user group, and the strong sense of participation, emotional belonging and identity brought by bullet screen to the user group provides continuous power for the popularity of bullet screen.

### ***3.1. A strong sense of involvement***

The unique barrage mechanism brings a strong sense of participation to the user group. Barrage to the groups are watching video to greater engagement, the audience is no longer unilateral information receiver, in the process of watching video can output information, can even through the barrage to extension of video content and form, conclude the second creation of video, for example, barrage clan in video subtitles at the bottom of the suspect character inner activities, For example, "Yuan Fang is not calm in heart at the moment", he used specific symbols to add blush on the faces of the heroes and heroines when the plot of the hero and heroine heartbreak each other, and so on. He also participated in the creation of the video and increased the interest in the process of watching the video. According to Bakhtin: "In carnival, everyone is not watching as spectators, people are not sitting on the sidelines, but active participants, participating in the carnival, and everyone is living in the carnival, because in its concept, it is universal." [11] In the "carnival" world, everyone is a participant, without distinction between high and low, and a new interactive relationship is presented between me and others [12]. The sense of distance between people disappears and people can gag at will. Immersive video interaction brings a strong sense of

participation and makes the audience have a stronger willingness to watch and send bullet screen.

### **3.2. Emotional belonging and identity**

The identity brought about by the specific access mechanism of bullets. Bilibili website members have a specific access mechanism, login through the mobile phone number can only become a registered member, full members must pass a special test, can become a full member of the website, get the qualification to send bullet screen. The unique membership access mechanism creates a unique identity for users. Individuals interact and present in a specific bullet screen space, thus forming a virtual identity, thinking that "I belong to this group". Individuals will make statements that can show their own identity under certain circumstances, for example, In the 2019 Bilibili New Year's Eve party, users flooded the screen with bullet screen comments such as "little broken station B", "Bilibili Cheers" and "No regrets entering station B" to show their identity as "station B"[8]. In the carnival theory, people temporarily forget the rigid hierarchy of reality and bid farewell to the frustrating reality by taking off the crown, coronation, play, farce and gossip during the carnival, and build a utopia of subverting privileges, owning power, wealth and freedom [13]. On the Internet, the virtual identity of netizens is like a mask, hiding their real identity, easily realizing coronation and uncoronation, Posting bullet screen in the way of laughing and cursing comments, discovering common interests and emotional communities, generating a kind of resonant emotional experience and value identification, so as to realize their own emotional belonging.

## **4. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the cultural impetus for the popularity of pop-ups comes from both the individual audience and the group. Bullet-screen functions satisfy individual audiences' need for two-way emotional interaction, fulfil young people's need for self-expression, and provide audiences with a form of textual re-creation that adapts to and perpetuates mainstream culture, making more and more individuals willing to use and post pop-ups. The expansion of the popularity of Bullet screen culture is due to the sense of participation, belonging and identity that pop-up culture gives audiences. Based on Bakhtin's carnival theory, this paper examined the cultural motivations for the popularity of pop-up culture from the perspective of individual and group audiences, hoping to enrich academic research on the development of pop-up culture and provide a new perspective on the study of pop-up popularity factors.

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