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## Research on the “Double” Motive in the Novel *Blueprint*

Wei WANG<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

The German female writer Charlotte Kerner has created a series of works on the theme of science and technology to explore the relationship between people and technology and nature. One of the most striking features of his work is the frequent appearance of the “double” motive. This phenomenon is most evident in the book *Blueprint*. This article explores the “double” motive in the novel *Blueprint* from the perspectives of “mother-daughter doubles” and “person-painting doubles”. This paper analyzes the aesthetic effect of its performance, and then studies the relationship among the motive, the author’s aesthetic strategy and the theme of the work. In addition, it is concluded that “double” is full of dialectical philosophy of opposition and unity. It not only highlights the author’s aesthetic strategy of paying attention to the dual combination of character and dialectical movement in character shaping, which makes the character of the character more full and contradictory conflict more intense, but also endues the work with the depth of human nature.

*Keywords:* Charlotte Kerner, double, personality traits, aesthetic effect, social interaction, social environment.

### Introduction

The German female writer Charlotte Kerner has created a series of works on the theme of science and technology to explore the relationship between people and technology and nature. From the four novels she created, it is not difficult for readers to know the exploration and reflection of the real society and humanity

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behind the fantastic virtual world in the book. In addition, the most prominent feature is the frequent appearance of the “double”. This phenomenon is most evident in the book *Blueprint*. Therefore, we ask the following questions. In what form does the avatar phenomenon in the novel appear? How does the avatar phenomenon relate to the author’s aesthetic strategy? How does it serve the ideological theme of the work? Based on the above content, this article explores the avatar motive in the novel *Blueprint* from the perspectives of “mother-daughter doubles” and “person-painting doubles”, and analyzes the aesthetic effect.

### About “Double”

The word *doppelgänger* is a loanword from the German *Doppelgänger*, a compound noun formed by combining the two nouns *Doppel* (*double*) and *Gänger* (*walker or goer*) (New Oxford American Dictionary, 2005). As a form of unique representation of human thinking, “double” is closely related to human psychology and cognition (Yu Lei 2013). In German, the original intention is *two people walking together*. *The Duden Dictionary* interprets this as *Person, die jmdm zum Verwechseln ähnlich sieht* (Dudenredaktion, 2011). In modern times, the term twin stranger is occasionally used (Murray, 2017). It can be understood more deeply as a person who can replace each other and exchange identity because of their similar looks (Frenzel, 1999). A deeper meaning can refer to the other self in the mind of each person who is ghostly like a shadow. These professional look-alikes are often represented by talent agencies that specialize in celebrity impersonators (Kent, 2003).

In psychology, the phenomenon of “double” was once the focus of the European psychoanalytic school. For example, the Austrian psychologist Otto Rank in the early 20th century discussed it from the aspects of “narcissism”, “fraternal rivalry” and “thanatophobia” (Rank, 1980). In his book *The Uncanny*, Freud reveals the relationship between “uncanny” and “double” (Freud, 2003). He also pointed out that the transformation of the avatar relationship is the confrontation, traversal, and exchange between “ego libido” and “object libido” (Lei, 2013).

The first known use, in the slightly different form *Doppelgänger*, occurs in the novel *Siebenkäs* (1796) by Jean Paul, in which he explains his newly coined word by a footnote - while actually the word *Doppelgänger* also appears, but with a quite different meaning (Fleming, 2006). The author writes that *Seibinkas*, who pursues a happy marriage, and his best friend, *Leibgeber*, have not only have the same nature and signs, but also wear the same costumes, as if ‘a soul is assigned to two bodies’. What is fascinating is the difference between the two in terms of human life: *Seibinkas* is tolerant, and *Leibgeber* prefers to punish. To a certain extent, this established the original creation paradigm of the avatar literature - similar physiological characteristics, the opposite spiritual world (Yu Lei, 2013).

The concept of alter egos and double spirits has appeared in the folklore, myths, religious concepts, and traditions of many cultures throughout human history (Zusne, 1989). So far, the phenomenon of “double” in literature has experienced the evolution from “the pattern of good and evil” to the “schizophrenia mode” to the “ethical chaotic mode” to the “identity transposition mode” (Yu Lei, 2013). It has gradually evolved into a unique literary motive. Whether in the trend of romanticism, realism, or even modernism, “double” can have described as a “frequent visitor” in the creation of novels. For example, Allen Poe of the United States and Dostoevsky of Russia are masters in this field. German playwright Goethe described an experience in his autobiography *Dichtung und Wahrheit* in which he and his double passed one another on horseback (Goethe, 1969), Lord Byron uses *doppelgänger* imagery to explore the duality of human nature (Burwick, 2011) In *The Devil’s Elixir* (1815), a man murders the brother and stepmother of his beloved princess, finds his *doppelgänger* has been sentenced to death for these crimes in his stead, and liberates him, only to have the *doppelgänger* murder the object of his affection (Hoffman, 1829).

In short, the duality of the “double” phenomenon corresponds to the power of the two interactions that exist in us. Just like Apollo and Dionysus created by Nietzsche. One represents the principles of reason, order, logic, and moderation, while the other represents the spontaneity, strong emotions, intuition, and unrestrained desires. The gods in our personality guide us to ponder in the orderly law, and Dionysian encourages us to rely on intuition to do things, resist the control of authority, and dare to indulge ourselves. Each of us is actually a combination of Apollo and Dionysus. Those who follow the rules will also have crazy impulses. On the contrary, many people who seem to be indulgent will also show rational positive sides which like sunshine. Therefore, the most important meaning of the “double” phenomenon in literary works is to evoke readers to examine their own complex inner world, so that people do not forget the need to “look in” when faced with strong external stimuli.

The German sci-fi female writer Charlotte Krener has fully utilized the characteristics and advantages of science fiction elements in her work. She created a strange “double” image, which gave the character a unique aesthetic value, and raised the theme of science fiction to the height of humanity.

### **The “Double” Motive in *Blueprint***

The novel *Blueprint* tells the story of the cloned mother and daughter: the famous female pianist Iris Sellin was diagnosed with a terminal illness. In order to inherit her talents, she made a decision that was unacceptable to the world: clone the embryo with her own cells. She will make a daughter with the same beautiful appearance and amazing talents as she did by natural childbirth after ten-month pregnancy. Her child, Siri, came to the world in such a unique way. As expected,

the daughter quickly showed a very high musical talent under the training of her mother. However, she gradually grew up and realized that she was living in her mother's world: she not only inherited the mother's appearance, but also assumed the mother's wishes. Siri, who lost her self, began to embark on the road of finding herself with conflicts and inner struggles. According to the original intention, a very important feature of the "double" phenomenon is the similarity between the subject and the "double". From this point of view, the work of cloning people has the superior conditions for writing this phenomenon (Schede, 2003). In the novel *Blueprint*, there are even two different forms of "double": "mother-daughter doubles" and "person-painting doubles".

### *Mother-Daughter Doubles*

Iris and Siri in *Blueprint* have the same genetics and a highly consistent appearance. In the novel, there is such a wonderful plot description in the novel:

*"In front of the large mirror in the foyer, Iris and Siri stood there, side by side, hand in hand. First, each of them is looking at themselves in the mirror. Iris's eyes scanned her high forehead, the inconspicuous nose, and some unbalanced eyebrows on the left, a decisive chin, and gray-blue eyes. At the same time, Siri's tender face is smiling. Then, their eyes crossed and looked for another pair of gray eyes in the mirror" (Kerner 2003).*

What is amazing is that Kerner did not let the two people in front of the mirror look directly at each other, but let the eyes "scan" a bit, from the forehead to the nose, from the eyebrows to the chin, and finally to the eyes. This slow motion "scanning" leaves enough room for the reader to think about the consistency of the two.

The subsequent conversation is even more intriguing:

*"Do you see two eyes or four eyes?" Iris asked. "I can see only two eyes". Siri replied. "Now, you are me, I am you". "Me-you", the child smiled, "you-me". "When you grow up, you will grow up like me. At that time, you are a famous female pianist", said the mother (Kerner 2003).*

This repeated, continuous combination of the pronouns "you" and "me" clearly pointed out that the emphasis on the "double" relationship between the mother and the daughter are difficult to distinguish.

Moreover, as time goes by, the similarities between mother and daughter are getting higher and higher. This process has repeatedly appeared in Siri's self-report:

*"We see us more and more like each other every day and every week. One morning at the age of thirteen, I wanted to take a closer look at myself in the bathroom mirror, but I only saw my mother" (Kerner 2003).*

Under the premise of such a premise, the game of mother and daughter two "role swaps" has been unfolding. It happened when Siri was 14 years old and his grandmother was sick and hospitalized:

*Siri was fourteen years old; she played her mother for the first time. She carefully drew a thin eyebrow for herself, blackened her own eyelashes, and chose a lipstick from Iris's cosmetics to apply her lips. The height difference between her and her mother is only four centimeters. No one can see the difference, especially when she puts on high heels and the gray sweater. "*

*She carefully dressed like the twin sister, with the same expression in front of the mirror, put her hair behind her ear, and then ordered: "Iris, go to the hospital right now! Katarina is waiting for us" (Kerner 2003).*

*In this way, Siri, dressed as her mother, went to the hospital repeatedly to visit her grandmother. She almost deceived everyone, and even wrote Alice on the CD box of the doctor who came to ask for the signature" (Kerner 2003).*

Later, this "role swap" game actually touched the boundaries of ethics. It developed into the scene of Siri's rendezvous of Christian in the name of her mother. Such a plot setting has effectively broken through the reader's expectation of vision. It can be said that the tension of the "double" has been brought to the extreme, forming a shocking and powerful effect.

In addition to the similarity in appearance, the higher realm of the "double" relationship is the spiritual consistency. Literary psychology tells us:

*"People's psychology is not closed, but an open system. One of the important signs of human beings is social interaction with each other, which leads to communication, attraction, and exclusion. In communication, there is inevitably a telepathy between people, so that people's psychology also communicates with others and changes, flows and updates in the process of communication. The social environment has nurtured the character of the character, and the psychology of the character has formed in a specific ecological environment. Therefore, literary works must not only express the psychology of each character, but also express the telepathy between the characters" (Gurong & Shuyuan, 2003).*

The special motive of "double" has laid a natural and good foundation for describing this telepathy between characters. Therefore, in the novel *Blueprint*, it is natural to reflect the wonderful instinct between Iris and Siri. In particular,

after the rebellious Siri returns to “double life” again, she seems to suffer the same pain as her mother. Like her mother, she is getting older and even suffering from depression.

*“Janek is increasingly worried about the situation of Siri. She has no idea how to be good, so she went to consult a psychiatrist, whose diagnosis is depression. The expert said that this phenomenon is common when a relative has a chronic disease. Nevertheless, the symptoms in Siri are particularly obvious. After all, this relative is the mother of Siri and the twin sister of Siri. In this case, it is not surprising that she has caught in a more intense sense of guilt. Because she is still healthy, she feels the same illness, and even puts herself in a situation, which is uncomfortable” (Kerner 2003).*

This uncomfortable feeling of mutual sympathy is also evident in Siri’s self-report:

*“This kind of rooted inability to move is the feeling I have experienced in my dreams. It seems to be sitting in a wheelchair with Iris, but this wheelchair has no wheels” (Kerner 2003).*

*“Iris is slowly getting old. At fifty-one, she looks like she has been more than sixty. I saw every wrinkle and every old plaque, falling hair and thin fingers. I also saw myself and slowly passed away” (Kerner 2003).*

When the doctor showed Siri a picture of her mother’s mind with white spots, she felt like

*“The white spots spreading in my brain. Iris didn’t know me, and I didn’t recognize Iris. We have become the same again, one brain is exactly the same as the other, and of course the same heart and the same soul” (Kerner 2003).*

At this time, Siri has fully realized the feelings and changes of her mother’s body and mind.

The novel also mentioned that when the nurse helped Iris turn over and organize her bed,

*“Siri saw the naked back of Iris. Siri felt like she was looking at her body” (Kerner 2003).*

Even more bizarre is that on the night when Siri has awakened by the parasite’s nightmare, Iris, who was lying in the hospital, had a nightmare of the same content. *“When Siri visited her mother next time, the hospital nurse told Siri that her mother had a nightmare two days ago. Iris sat up in her bed and screamed in horror. That day was the night when Si Liyi has awakened by the parasite in her sleep” (Kerner 2003).* The response of the two after the wake of the dream is strikingly similar, and there is nothing more than this to prove that the two are the same heart and the same soul.

Even the scene in which Siri made a final farewell to Iris's body was clearly marked by the "double".

*"She (Siri) bent down to the deceased, like looking in a mirror. She touched her own eyebrows and the eyebrows of the person lying on the bed. Her index finger slid over the bridge of the two people. She felt two equally curved lips and two identical chins. Silky must re-feel and re-understand where one stops and where does the other start. Who is dead, who is still alive?" (Kerner 2003).*

In fact, the mother and daughter in the novels with similar appearances and mutual "double" represent two different states of life. The strong Iris embodies the social and secular side that is linked to the interests. (Lange, 2001) What dominates the rebellious Siri is the relentless pursuit of the original, most authentic "self" in the heart. These two parts of human life are like the two protagonists. From "harmony" to "disagreement" to "competition", they finally returned to "double life". They were inseparable and joined together to achieve a complete life in the eternal unity of opposites.

It is the dialectical aesthetics in the novel that allows the reader has suppressed by the worldly and reality, while realizing the collision of the two "Siris". At this time, people will get the freedom to get rid of the bondage and the pleasure of taking off the mask, facing the "other half" that is forgotten in the depths of the soul.

### *Person- Painting Doubles*

In the novel *Blueprint*, in addition to the "double" relationship between Iris and Siri, there is also a special "double" relationship between Siri and Johannes, the person in the paintings on her bedroom wall.

At the time of Iris's illness, Siri had a special hobby - "She (Siri) likes to lie in bed and talks for hours with a painting hanging on the wall" (Kerner 2003). She found and cut out from many twin books and finally made them into a painting (Kerner 2003). The character in the painting is Johannes. In the novel, Siri introduced his story in detail:

*"Johannes is a strange twin brother of Lazarus Crowledo. The two brothers lived in Genoa in the seventeenth century. Lazarus, who grew up like a normal person, held the gnome-like twin brother Johannes in his arms. The head of the disabled child, Johannes, leaned back softly and his mouth opened. He seems to be sleeping because his eyes are always closed. The arms and legs have dragged underneath like the ragdoll's limbs. Such an incomplete person is a parasite. He can't eat on his own, he can only get nutrition and blood circulation through his twin brother. Experts refer to people like Lazarus as the main body. He does not need another person, but controls another person. Johannes is just a parasitic" (Kerner 2003).*



Siri and Johannes in the painting have many similarities. In the eyes of Siri, the mother, Iris, is like the main body of Lazarus who controls everything. In addition, she is like a gnome-like weak and disabled Johannes, controlled by the other side. When she saw the painting, she would think of it: *"I can't live without Iris. My life is connected with her, just like Johannes is on Lazarus"* (Kerner 2003). Therefore, Siri regarded Johannes as the most loyal partner and confidant. *"I (Siri) think that only he (Johannes) understands me, even though he only exists on the copperplate"* (Kerner 2003).

Therefore, Siri regarded Johannes as her "double" and unconsciously projected her thoughts, emotions, and psychological activities onto the people in this painting. She will express her confusion to Johannes:

*"Did you open your eyes and look at him?  
Have you ever spoken?  
Don't want to see the world? Alternatively, are you blind?  
Can you influence him by thinking? Do you love each other or hate each other?  
Do you have your own feelings? Or is everything going through him and feeling with him?  
Do you have no emotion like me?"* (Kerner 2003)

This passage expresses not only Siri's confusion to Johannes and his brother, but also to herself and her mother. When Iris was seriously ill, Siri often confided to Johannes about the tangled pains in her heart. Here is her self-report:

*"You know me, but she (Iris) didn't recognize me today." I told Johannes, "Maybe I should tell her, I am Johanna. Because I am like you. I am also very familiar with the feeling that nothing can be done and has been held in the arms of others. Are you finally dead together? "I asked my suffering partner. "When a person dies, there may not be any feeling of fear at all. After a grand silence, there is no struggle, and finally there is no problem "* (Kerner 2003).

She also asked Johannes: "How should a twin prepare for the death of another, like a cloned daughter's death for her mother. Then what will happen? Will I also get sick? Is this all genetically already doomed? Am I not twenty-one years old, but I am fifty-one years old like her?"

*It is not only the skin and the bones or the internal organs that are connected together, but two people share them, so they are inseparable. Moreover, there is emotion. In particular, cloning emotions bind two people together until death separates them.*

*Will I really die with her? "I repeatedly asked John (Kerner 2003)*

In fact, the metaphysical interaction between such people and paintings is not uncommon in literary works. One of the classic examples is *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from Oscar Wilde, a famous English novelist in the 19th-century. Dorian Gray, the protagonist of the novel, hopes that he will remain young and pray for his portrait to replace him and become ugly, so that he can live a life of degeneration. Therefore, the Dorian Gray in the portrait is suffering from the vicissitudes of the years, getting uglier. At the same time, it also engraved the traces of the soul's fall. In reality, the true Dorian Gray is still young and not subject to age. Later, Dorian Gray gradually concealed his life. He thought of his own incompetent limbs, he wanted to rehabilitate himself, and the portrait was constantly reminding him of his sins. In the end, he finally couldn't stand the torture of the spirit and stabbed the portrait with a knife. As a result, he fell into a pool of blood and the portrait became radiant (Wilde, 2004). In this novel, the portrait and the protagonist are typical "double" relationships.

Unlike Dorian Gray, which is written by Wilde, Siri is not facing his own portrait. Nevertheless, she undoubtedly also cast her thoughts on the people in the painting. Siri even saw Johannes as her own shadow. She believes that he is an indispensable part of life. So one time, *when she was not at home, Janek took the picture. After she discovered it, she shouted at him: 'Hang up the picture right away! Otherwise I will leave here forever!'* (Kerner, 2003).

The dialogue between Siri and Johannes in the painting is actually talking to her own heart. To be exact, Siri is talking to another person. It is a dialogue between Siri, who is hard to separate from her "mother-sister", and Siri, who wants to get rid of the control. This is also the collision of life poles. So Siri said to herself. *"When I talked to Johannes, I was already floating in a space with no time limit"* (Kerner, 2003). Only in such a space, her thinking can be completely precipitated and deep into the essence of life. In addition, through the communication between Siri and Johannes, people not only heard two different sounds echoing, but also felt the confrontation between two different emotions in the heart of the characters (Lange, 2006).

Overall, in the book, *Blueprint*, the relationship of co-existence and interdependence between the subject and the "replacement" constitutes a sense of harmony and unity. The magical "double" phenomenon also made the forced humanity appear on stage. This is in contrast to the main parts, which together create a fierce drama conflict.

## Conclusion

Zaifu, a well-known scholar who advocates literature as a human study, has had such an incisive exposition in artistic creation: *“The court set up by the legalist tortured the criminals of the prisoner. Once it tortured the crime, it completed its mission. The artist not only wants to torture the sin, but also tortures the whiteness under sin, that is hidden in the depths of human nature. Compared with politicians, legalists, and scientists, writers and artists show the characteristics of wisdom and the particularity of vision in this matter. If the writer’s artist’s vision only stays on the surface and only sees ‘sin’ (or only sees whiteness), then he will not have a real artistic discovery. Therefore, aspiring writers and artists always try their best to open the threshold of people’s hearts. They dig deep into the world of people’s souls and discover the mystery of humanity that politicians, legalists, and scientists cannot see. The writer artist has established his own merits at this point”* (Zaifu, 1986). That is to say, when a successful artist or writer is shaping a character, he should find the two factors of contradiction in the deeper character where others only see a heavy factor.

To illustrate, Zaifu proposed the principle of double combination of character in his personality combination theory, and pointed out the important features of deep structure of character: *“(1) It is not an external arrangement of heterogeneous personality elements, but a contradiction combination of multiple personality elements with characteristics of two polarities within the character. (2) It is not a static addition of good and evil, but a dynamic process of dialectical movement. (3) It is not the behavioral facts of the apparent human beings, but the struggle of the deep opposing intellectual powers and the resulting emotional tremors”* (Zaifu, 1986)

In the novel *Blueprint*, the author skillfully shapes the characters through the motive of “double”. She made two self-representatives representing reality and ideals appear at the same time, and vividly portrayed the deep regrets and reluctance of the characters. This dialectical philosophy, full of opposition and unity, highlights the author’s aesthetic strategy in character shaping, that is, focusing on the dual combination of personality and dialectical movement. This makes the character’s character more full and the contradictory conflicts more intense. At the same time, this also endues the work with the depth of human nature.

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