Connotations
Vol. 35 (2026)

Strange Case of Stevenson and Unseen Collaborators: "A Chapter on Dreams" as a Textual Double of *Jekyll and Hyde*

GERO GUTTZEIT

Connotations: A Journal for Critical Debate, Vol. 35 (2026): 13-31.
DOI: 10.25623/conn035-guttzeit-1

Abstract
Robert Louis Stevenson's essay "A Chapter on Dreams" is his most prominent discussion of how his 1886 novella, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, came into being. This article situates the essay in the history of the literary autocommentary, analyses its relationship to *Jekyll and Hyde* as one of doubling, and reads it as a contribution to authorship theory. Unlike the dark, fractured doppelganger in *Jekyll and Hyde*, Stevenson's reflections on authorship in "A Chapter on Dreams" invoke the Scottish Brownies—as a humorous and invisible version of the Gothic double—to playfully illuminate the sometimes happy, sometimes haunting multiplication of selves in the process of literary composition.

1. Introduction

The exact circumstances of Robert Louis Stevenson's composition of his most famous novella, *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), will remain shrouded in mystery. But comments by himself and his wife Fanny offer a narrative that is curiously doubled like the novella itself: after Fanny's initial critique, Stevenson destroyed the first draft, and it was only the second, more allegorical, draft that Stevenson then revised

for publication (see Swearingen 98-102, for a summative account of origin stories). The year after publishing *Jekyll and Hyde*, Stevenson moved to the US and, in October 1887, wrote "A Chapter on Dreams," a text that is part essay and part commentary on the composition of *Jekyll and Hyde*. It was first published in *Scribner's Magazine* on 3 January 1888 as part of a twelve-article series for which Stevenson was offered the considerable sum of $3,500 (see Norquay in Stevenson, "A Chapter on Dreams" 199).

Scholarly work tends to address "A Chapter on Dreams" as an anticipation of early twentieth-century occupations such as the Freudian psychoanalysis of dreams, but more recently there has also been a focus on the antecedents in Victorian theories of brain and mind. For example, Stephen Arata reads "A Chapter on Dreams" as a description of Stevenson's literary artistry and technique as well as in terms of Freud's concepts of the manifest and latent dimensions of the dream and their uncanny effects (see Arata 53, 57), noting that Freud was Stevenson's "exact contemporary" (Arata 53). By contrast, in Anne Stiles's neuroscientific reading, the double motif becomes an indication of Victorian theories of the brain, since, she argues, Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde might be attributed to the two hemispheres of the brain: "Jekyll exhibits left-hemisphere attributes (masculinity, whiteness, logic, intelligence, humanness), while Hyde embodies right-hemisphere traits (femininity, racial indeterminacy, madness, emotion, and animality)" (37).

Stevenson's pair takes up a particular position in the transatlantic literary history of the double. Generally, the doppelganger represents "an unsettling figure because it renders problematic any fixed sense of individuality or subjectivity—it is a figure of identity as/in crisis" (Murnane 172). The term "Doppeltgänger" was coined by Jean Paul in his novel *Siebenkäs* (1796-1797). E. T. A. Hoffmann's *Doppelgänger*, present in such texts as *Die Elixiere des Teufels* and "Die Doppeltgänger," is regarded as true to life by T. H. Huxley in his address on the "Hypothesis that Animals are Automata" (1874). Huxley argues that "Hoffmann's terrible conception of the 'Doppelt-gänger' is realised by men in this state, who live two lives, in one of which they may be guilty of

the most criminal acts, while in the other they are eminently virtuous and respectable" (572-73; also quoted in Proctor 156). The literary histories of authorship and the double meet repeatedly, since the double may also, as I've argued elsewhere, be used as a figure of the author's identity: "the doubling of Frankenstein in the monster unsettles Frankenstein's originality: the doppelganger renders problematic the myth of the 'solitary genius' of the Romantic author" (Guttzeit, "Authoring" 284). The complex relationships between *Jekyll and Hyde* and "A Chapter on Dreams" are thus particularly instructive for the history of the authorial autocommentary, the literary Gothic, and authorship in general.

My aim in approaching Stevenson's "A Chapter on Dreams" here is three-fold: (1) to situate the text in the history of authorial autocommentaries, especially in relation to earlier autocommentaries on Gothic authorship by writers such as Mary Shelley and Edgar Allan Poe; (2) to argue for a reading of "A Chapter on Dreams" that views this text itself as a narrative double of *Jekyll and Hyde*; and (3) to interpret how Stevenson's playful depiction of the Scottish Brownies as his collaborators contributes to the theory of authorship. Stevenson, I argue, mediates the autonomous and heteronomous aspects of authorship by doubling the narrative logic of *Jekyll and Hyde*, while he thinks through his ideas on the multiplicity and collectivity of single authorship in the figure of the Brownie/s. The following section places "A Chapter on Dreams" within the tradition of the nineteenth-century authorial autocommentary and outlines its connections to late nineteenth-century representations of authorship within fictional texts.

2. The Authorial Autocommentary and Author Fictions of the Late Nineteenth Century

Literary authors' comments on their own texts have fascinated audiences for a long time. If these comments take the shape of texts that stand on their own, appear some time after the original work, and are

addressed to the public, then this autonomous, delayed, and public authorial epitext is what Gérard Genette calls an "autocommentary" (352, 367). Such texts tend to emphasise an understanding of authorship either as mainly autonomous—e.g., the author as the master over the text—or as mainly heteronomous—e.g., the author as subject to genre requirements or divine inspiration (see Berensmeyer 27-29; Guttzeit, *Figures* 25-27). An aspect Genette does not note is that authorial autocommentaries frequently metatextually repeat certain elements of the original work on which they comment. For the early and mid-nineteenth century, we may take as significant Gothic examples Mary Shelley's 1831 introduction to the third edition of *Frankenstein* and Edgar Allan Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" (1845) on his poem "The Raven" (1845).

As a prefatory introduction to a later edition of *Frankenstein*, Shelley's text was not, strictly speaking, published on its own, yet it is certainly a delayed and public authorial text that comments on the original work. Shelley emphasises Romantically inflected aspects of inspiration such as childhood experiences and dreams. For example, she speaks of her childhood pleasures as "the formation of castles in the air" and "the indulging in waking dreams" (173), focussing in particular on her time as a girl spent in Scotland, on the "northern shores of Tay, near Dundee" (173). In her account, the origin of *Frankenstein* lay in a daydream: "I saw—with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,—I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together" (176). Shelley likens her own daydream to the experience of Victor Frankenstein, who, in her vision, first "sleeps" and is then "awakened" by his Creature (176). Shelley's vision is a waking one, in which she clearly foregrounds heteronomous aspects of authorship: "[m]y imagination, unbidden, *possessed* and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind" (176; emphasis added). Shelley's autocommentary thus portrays her composition of Frankenstein as the result of the Romantic imagination holding power over her.

By contrast, Poe's "The Philosophy of Composition" presents the origin of "The Raven" as one that is wholly controlled by its magisterial

author, i.e. autonomous. Poe claimed (17-18) that he chose a rhetorical effect ("Beauty") and was then able to quasi-mathematically compute which sounds ("*o*" and "*r*") and words ("nevermore") were the best to achieve this effect in the reader. Poe's critique of the "vanity" of other authors (14) and his stance against Romantic inspiration are reasons why Genette argues that "The Philosophy of Composition" inaugurated the modern tradition of authorial autocommentaries (Genette 368). While contentious, Poe's text marked an epochal shift in views on rhetorical poetics and (Romantic) inspiration (see Guttzeit, *Figures* 124-71). Like Shelley speaks of Frankenstein's dream within her own dream, Poe metatextually integrates the original work into his autocommentary. "The Philosophy of Composition" thus mimics the progression of "The Raven" by ending with a quotation of the final lines of the poem: "And my soul *from out that shadow* that lies floating on the floor / Shall be lifted—nevermore" (25). Shelley's and Poe's autocommentaries, then, share metatextual characteristics but differ in their emphasis on the heteronomy or autonomy of authorship.

These two earlier examples of autocommentaries help us situate "A Chapter on Dreams." Stevenson's text, despite some admissions of autonomous control over his novella, foregrounds the heteronomous aspects of authorship by focusing, like Shelley, predominantly on dreams and the unconscious as a breeding ground of texts. Yet akin to how Poe's autocommentary in "The Philosophy of Composition" doubles the poetic progression of "The Raven," Stevenson's "A Chapter on Dreams" performs a doubling of the narrative logic of *Jekyll and Hyde*. A pronoun shift reveals that the dreamer Stevenson has been talking about "is no less a person than myself" (135), namely Stevenson, which parallels the dénouement in Jekyll's "Statement" that Hyde is the same person as himself. A key difference to earlier autocommentaries lies in Stevenson's introduction of the Brownies. Stevenson refers to them as "my unseen collaborators" (137), a metaphor that delineates a positively connoted, mythological, collective, and invisible figuration of heteronomous aspects of authorship. The text tellingly shifts between the plural Brownies and a singular Brownie, "some unseen collabora-

tor, whom I keep locked in a back garret" (136), who represents a singular doppelganger of the author. In this innovation in the tradition of the authorial autocommentary, Stevenson shaped a trend of Gothic figurations of authorship that emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century in literary fictions.

As a result of the increasing professionalisation of literary authorship over the course of the nineteenth century, Stevenson's contemporaries were hardly less invested than Shelley or Poe in conceptualising and narrating authorship, the most influential of examples being that of Stevenson's friend, Henry James. In the late nineteenth century, writers' reflections on their profession meet with the Gothic double in interesting ways. As Ingo Berensmeyer has shown in *Author Fictions: Narrative Representations of Literary Authorship since 1800* (2023), it is in this period that metafictional representations of literary authorship within literary texts—which Berensmeyer calls *author fictions*—turn towards split personalities. His examples include Henry James, Rudyard Kipling, and Max Beerbohm (see 181). In stories such as James's "The Private Life" (1892), Berensmeyer argues, the writer "needs to have two personae, two identities, one for society and one for privacy" (183), a requirement that is also connected to the emergence within such Gothic author fictions of literary doppelgangers. This "irruption of the fantastic" into author fictions around 1900 is attributed by Berensmeyer to the increasing number of Gothic texts at the fin-de-siècle but it also stands as "an indication that the mimetic representation of the topic of authorship has reached its limit" (191). Often told in short stories, narratives of literary authorship of the time have exhausted the earlier nineteenth-century "resources of the bildungsroman," as they anticipate the development of the early twentieth-century *künstlerroman* with its shift to the "isolated artist in conflict with society" (Berensmeyer 192).

Berensmeyer's insights into the Gothic figurations of authorship at the fin-de-siècle need to be extended to Stevenson's peculiar textual double and viewed in connection with the tradition of the authorial autocommentary. In this regard, Berensmeyer's delineation of the late nineteenth-century tectonic shifts within literary author fictions helps

us to relate the *non-fictional* counterparts to *fictional* figurations of authorship of the time, including non-fictional authorial autocommentaries such as Stevenson's. Against this background, Stevenson's musings on his own authorship in "A Chapter on Dreams" acquire additional salience for a history of authorship in the nineteenth century and the Late Victorian period specifically. Shelley, Poe, and Stevenson all used literary, more specifically Gothic, motifs from their original works in the writing of their autocommentaries.

This is apparent in the two striking metaphors Stevenson employs to discuss memory in the essayistic opening of "A Chapter on Dreams": the past as text/ure and the theatre of the brain. The first of these is metatextual in that it draws attention to the shared textual quality of the woven text and the strands of memory: "The past is all of one texture" (127). Human memory, Stevenson argues, works in such a way that textual and real memories cannot be distinguished. However, the terms Stevenson uses to explain this conflation are drawn from popular late nineteenth-century subgenres of the novel. Stevenson mentions the hope, "in proper story-book fashion" (127), of the unexpected inheritance of colonial riches, a trope found not only in children's adventure stories but also in realist and Gothic novels. Stevenson's overall emphasis tends to the model of the Gothic novel, beginning with his focus on the past. What is more, in a Gothic turn of phrase, this past is "feigned or suffered," remembered when "darkness and sleep reign undisturbed" in the body (127). There is a sentimental and nostalgic feeling that suffuses Stevenson's description of a past that is "all gone, past conjuring," when everything left is "air-painted pictures of the past" (128). For Stevenson, it is thus not only the origin of literary texts that is explicable through intertextuality but also factual memory.

The second metaphorical device is theatrical and repeated throughout the essay: "that *small theatre of the brain* which we keep brightly lighted all night long, after the jets are down" (127; emphasis added). Similarly, Poe also uses a theatrical metaphor early in "The Philosophy of Composition" when he muses on the author as a "literary *histrio,*" who would "shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes" (14). While brain and mind are certainly semantically close to

one another, Stevenson's "theatre of the brain" is a more materialistic formulation than the more common "theatre of the mind." As such, it may be read less as an anticipation of Freud than as a metaphor for so-called "unconscious cerebration." This term, coined by physician W. B. Carpenter in 1853, meant "that action of the brain which, though unaccompanied by consciousness, produces results which might have been produced by thought" (*OED*). One of the examples its populariser, Frances Power Cobbe, gives of unconscious cerebration includes an invisible figure: when we walk, Cobbe says, "[s]ome unseen guardian of our muscles manages all" the details (26). Later in Stevenson's essay, the theatre reoccurs as a "surgical theatre" in the student's nightmare at Edinburgh College in the fourth paragraph (129), as the "theatre of the mind" (134), in which chronology is hazy, and, crucially, as "man's internal theatre" (131), which is operated by the Little People or Brownies. The metaliterary metaphor of the theatre is employed by Stevenson to represent the workings of the mind in general but also the author's mind in particular. In both metaphors—the texture of the past and small theatre of the brain—the author is not quite in charge but subject to heteronomous processes of forgetting and inspiration, as the past remains only in pictures and his mind is operated by the mythological figures of the Brownies. Stevenson's autocommentary thus evinces typical metaliterary elements of its genre but integrates them in a way to mediate between autonomous and heteronomous aspects of authorship, with a tendency to emphasise the latter.

3. "A Chapter on Dreams" as a Textual Double of *Jekyll and Hyde*

In total, Stevenson's essay consists of approximately 4,900 words in eleven paragraphs. If only the most explicit parts of "A Chapter on Dreams" were regarded as an explicit autocommentary on *Jekyll and Hyde*, it would fall surprisingly short of expectations. While these passages remain the most often quoted, the section explicitly on the novella is a mere 390 words long, less than ten percent of the essay. The text's

invocation of the novella is almost comical at this point: in an autocommentary on his own process of composition, published with the clear interest of the journal audience in how *Jekyll and Hyde* came into being, it would be an enormous readerly disappointment not to be offered anything on the novella. Yet, the whole of the text is actually geared towards the question of how to characterise authorship and, in particular, Stevenson's own authorship. This rendering begins with the two opening metaphors and reaches its culmination in Stevenson's explicit comments on *Jekyll and Hyde*. He discusses the novella as conditioned by, on the one hand, the conditions of the marketplace and, on the other, the demands of literary art:

> I can but give an instance or so of what part is done sleeping and what part awake, and leave the reader to share what laurels there are, at his own nod, between myself and my collaborators; and to do this I will first take a book that a number of persons have been polite enough to read, *The* [sic] *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. I had long been trying to write a story on this subject, to find a body, a vehicle, for that strong sense of man's double being which must at times come in upon and overwhelm the mind of every thinking creature. I had even written one, *The Travelling Companion*, which was returned by an editor on the plea that it was a work of genius and indecent, and which I burned the other day on the ground that it was not a work of genius, and that *Jekyll* had supplanted it. Then came one of those financial fluctuations to which (with an elegant modesty) I have hitherto referred in the third person. (136-37)

This passage is rife with doublings beyond the explicit naming of "man's double being," doublings that are always on the verge of exploding into further multiplicity, as is typical of the doppelganger as a figure of identity in crisis: sleeping vs. being awake, genius vs. indecency, I vs. the third person, Jekyll vs. Hyde, *Jekyll and Hyde* vs. *The Travelling Companion*, and myself vs. my collaborators. The motif of the double thus informs both the literary text of *Jekyll and Hyde* and Stevenson's narrative of its origin in "A Chapter on Dreams." On its own, *Jekyll and Hyde* already forms an allegory of literary production, as Patrick Brantlinger has suggested (166-81). Such an allegorical move is typical of Gothic authorship, evident also in the examples of Poe and Shelley. As Caroline McCracken-Flesher characterises the autoreferential

character of the novella, in *Jekyll and Hyde*, "Stevenson's doctors dissect themselves" (109). In "A Chapter on Dreams," Stevenson dissects his moral, economic, and literary aspects as an author, yet leaves himself intact, too. Like Jekyll in the literary text, Stevenson does "most of the morality," while his Hyde-like Brownies "have not a rudiment of what we call a conscience" (137). The immoral aspects, such as "the business of the powders," are ascribed to the Brownies (137).

While the aesthetic aims of *Jekyll and Hyde* and "A Chapter on Dreams" seem to be quite different—entertaining mystification in the case of *Jekyll and Hyde* versus metatextual clarification in "A Chapter on Dreams"—such a simple opposition does not do justice to the complexity of either text. Indeed, if we read "A Chapter on Dreams" as a narrative of its own, some of its incidents, cases, and narratives map rather neatly onto *Jekyll and Hyde*. For instance, the number of their units is quite similar: eleven paragraphs and ten chapters, respectively. Hence I suggest to read the texture of the whole of "A Chapter on Dreams" as a double of *Jekyll and Hyde*. Most crucially, as mentioned in comparison to Poe's "Philosophy of Composition," "A Chapter on Dreams" doubles the progression of *Jekyll and Hyde*, with the pronoun shift revealing, in the ninth paragraph, that he, the dreamer, is Stevenson, the author, paralleling the final dénouement in *Jekyll and Hyde*: "Well, as regards the dreamer […] he is no less a person than myself" (136).

The progression of "A Chapter on Dreams" also follows a narrative logic. When first introducing the dreamer, Stevenson plays with the homophony of eye/I and alludes to the "strange case": "There is one of this kind [of dreamers] whom I have in my *eye*, and whose *case* is perhaps unusual enough to be described" (128; emphases added). The same homophony is used by Jekyll when he says that Hyde is "knit to him closer than a wife, closer than an eye" (58). The third units of both texts both mark a deterioration: Stevenson's "extremely poor experiences" (128) match Jekyll's increasing agitation under Utterson's interrogation concerning Hyde. The latter chapter has a title which deceptively, through a strange use of the past tense, suggests that Jekyll "was quite at ease" (17), when he is clearly not. In addition, both text parts

mark the beginning of a change of narrative pace by introducing longer passages of time, summative reports on how Jekyll and the dreamer increasingly learn about their other state: in the novella, about a year passes before the Carew Murder case, while the dreamer's dreams "had more the air and continuity of life" (129). The fourth paragraph in "A Chapter on Dreams" introduces the idea of the double life that was at the core of Stevenson's engagement with duality and its presence in *Jekyll and Hyde*: the dreamer begins "to dream in sequence and thus to lead a double life—one of the day, one of the night" (129). Here, Stevenson upholds the illusion of the non-identity of himself and the dreamer explicitly: "I should have said *he* studied, or was by way of studying, at Edinburgh College, which (it may be supposed) was how I came to know him" (129; emphasis added). There is a tongue-in-cheek tone to this sentence, as in other parts of the essay, which extends from the implied comment on the dreamer's rather modest efforts in his studies to the bracketed "it may be supposed." The dreamer's endless walk up the stairs is marked by "a flaring lamp with a reflector" "at every *second* flight" (129-30), where he meets "*single* persons" (130; emphases added). He suffers from this dream until he is "restored to the common lot of man" by "a simple draught" from "a certain doctor" (130), which parallels the significance of "the transforming draught" in the novella (60).

The anagnorisis that the dreamer is Stevenson himself is complemented by another revelation, which playfully re-introduces the operators of the small theatre of the brain: "for the Little People, what shall I say they are but just my Brownies, God bless them! who do one-half my work for me while I am fast asleep, and in all human likelihood, do the rest for me as well, when I am wide awake and fondly suppose I do it for myself" (136). While the tongue-in-cheek reference to "human likelihood" tempers their introduction (they are, after all, not human), here it seems as if the Brownies are the single creative force behind Stevenson's works: "one-half" repeats the idea of the double but "the rest" appears to turn Stevenson's own view of his authorship into a mere illusion of autonomy, as it explodes into multiplicity.

The eleventh section of "A Chapter on Dreams," the final reflection on the Brownies and a kind of Derridean supplement, reinforces the idea that the unseen operators of the theatre of the brain are crucial for the text as a whole: the Brownies, which Stevenson's text positions ambiguously as playful literary doubles, as the text shifts between a singular Brownie/collaborator and multiple Brownies/collaborators. What makes "A Chapter on Dreams" special, I will argue in detail in the next section, is how Stevenson unites the literary idea of the double with the mythological idea of the Brownies.

4. Stevenson's Scottish Brownies as Playful Literary Doubles

The Brownies are the distinctive element of the essay. Scholars have pointed out that "A Chapter on Dreams" develops statements by Stevenson that he had made shortly after arriving in the United States in an interview with the *New York Herald*, which was substantially reprinted by *The Critic* two days later. In the matter-of-fact interview, Stevenson is quite clear on his own, sole responsibility in invention: "Even when fast asleep I know that it is I who am inventing, and when I cry out it is with gratification to know that the story is so good" (*The Critic*, September 10, 1887, 133). The year before, however, in a letter to his American friend and illustrator, Will Hicok Low (January 2, 1886), Stevenson had thanked the latter for his illustrated edition of John Keats's *Lamia* and identified Jekyll and Hyde as "a Gothic gnome for your Greek nymph [Lamia]," saying that the gnome "is likewise quite willing to answer to the name of Low or Stevenson" (*Letters* 11). This conjuncture helps explain the choice of Brownies, particularly so since—like her Scottish gnome counterparts—Lamia is also invisible in Keats's poem. What Stevenson does not spell out in "A Chapter on Dreams" but what is crucial for the understanding of the Brownies as a figure of double and multiple authorship is that the Brownie was in itself one half of a mythological double of the Brownie and the Bogle (or Boggle).

This is the second central part of Stevenson's description of the origin of *Jekyll and Hyde*:

> For two days I went about racking my brains for a plot of any sort; and on the second night I dreamed the scene at the window, and a scene afterward split in two, in which Hyde, pursued for some crime, took the powder and underwent the change in the presence of his pursuers. All the rest was made awake, and consciously, although I think I can trace in much of it the manner of my Brownies. The meaning of the tale is therefore mine, and had long pre-existed in my garden of Adonis, and tried one body after another in vain; indeed, I do most of the morality, worse luck! and my Brownies have not a rudiment of what we call a conscience. Mine, too, is the setting, mine the characters. All that was given me was the matter of three scenes, and the central idea of a voluntary change becoming involuntary. Will it be thought ungenerous, after I have been so liberally ladling out praise to my unseen collaborators, if I here toss them over, bound hand and foot, into the arena of the critics? For the business of the powders, which so many have censured, is, I am relieved to say, not mine at all but the Brownies. (137)

Here, the Brownies appear as Stevenson's means to embrace heteronomous aspects of authorship and displace authorial responsibility. They also function as an emphatic figure of collaborative or multiple authorship against the idea of single authorship. As Audrey Murfin has convincingly argued, "it is not merely that Stevenson collaborated, but that his work is *about* collaboration—its benefits, but also its pitfalls" (3). For Murfin, Stevenson's collaborations with W. E. Henley, Fanny Stevenson, and Lloyd Osbourne are evidence that Stevenson "is always aware of his work being shaped by multiple forces, as he discusses most explicitly in his essay 'A Chapter on Dreams'" (14). Like two of his collaborators, the Little People in the essay are "near connections of the dreamer's" (Stevenson, "A Chapter on Dreams" 135). In this sense, as a figuration of multiple or collaborative authorship, the Brownies work in the plural and contrast with ideas of individual, solitary, and single authorship.

Yet the Brownies also function specifically as a perhaps paradoxical figure of multiple doubles. For one, Stevenson's framing of their mischievousness turns them into a comic counterpart to Hyde in the novella. In such a way, the Brownies, as Patrick Brantlinger has argued, "are Stevenson's doubles, creatures hidden inside the waking personality who beg comparison with the 'dwarfish' or 'gnome-like' Mr. Hyde" (168). As "unseen collaborators," they assist in dreaming for the

literary marketplace. Stevenson mainly speaks of his Brownies in the plural. In one telling phrase, however, the Brownie takes on increasing degrees of singularity, becoming a specific individual being in the process: "the whole of my published fiction should be the singlehanded product of some Brownie, some Familiar, some unseen collaborator, whom I keep locked in a back garret, while I get all the praise and he but a share (which I cannot prevent him getting) of the pudding" (136). While there is still considerably tension between "singlehanded" and "some Brownie" (i.e. one of a group), by the end of the sentence "he" is a specific Brownie and a specific figure of a hack writer in a writer's garret. That the sentence is in a subjunctive mood ("should") coincides with the hypothetical and metaphorical quality of all of the appearances of the Brownie. The brownie's singularity at this point is also more in tune with the mythological origins of the creature: "Unlike the fairies who were notably gregarious, the brownie was a solitary creature, usually male" (Henderson 32). What is more, the Brownie's singularity links him even more strongly to ideas of the double. In locking the Brownie into the proverbial poor writer's garret, Stevenson comically figures himself as the controlling half of a double that mirrors both the cabinet-confined Jekyll and the instinctive, hidden Hyde.

The significance of the Brownies as figures of doubling does not end in this oscillation between singularity and multiplicity. To extend Brantlinger's and Murfin's convincing accounts of the pressures of the market on literary authors and Stevenson's own investments in multiple authorship, we need to emphasise the cultural specificity of the figure of the Brownies and their own inherent doubleness. A brownie is "[a] 'wee brown man' [that] often appears in Scottish ballads and fairy tales" (*OED*, s.v. "brownie"). In her edition of "A Chapter on Dreams," Glenda Norquay captures the ambiguity of the Brownies with an excerpt from Chambers's *Scots Dictionary* as "benevolent household sprites," as she also writes that "J. C. Furnas notes that they should be seen as 'powerful' rather than 'quaint'" (199). Popularised in the early

nineteenth century, Brownies were household spirits that were supportive as long as they were not offended, for instance, by the gift of new clothes.

At the time of the publication of Stevenson's essay, the Brownies were in transatlantic circulation. For instance, Canadian Palmer Cox published stories, arguably ancestors of modern comic strips, about *The Brownies* in newspapers from 1879, and their adventures were collected in *The Brownies, Their Book* in 1887: here, the Brownies are harmless unseen beings that help and play pranks at night. Another example is the American Louise Imogen Guiney's publication, in the same year as "A Chapter on Dreams," of a prose volume called *Brownies and Bogles* (1888). Yet the Brownies also retained specific features of their origin in Scotland (and the North of England).

What is more, at crucial points in Scottish literary history, they appeared in such a way as to connect strongly to the idea of duality, often through their mythical counterpart of the bogles or boggarts. In the prologue to the sixth book of his translation of the *Aeneid* into Scots, early modern poet Gavin Douglas writes that the book is full of brownies and bogles: "Of browneis and of bogillis ful this buke." This line was employed by Robert Burns as the motto for "Tam O' Shanter," as Burns transferred Douglas's double motto into the Romantic revision of mythological beings. The "living tradition" of Scottish makars' use of folkloric elements hinges on Burns's identification of creatures such as "devils, ghosts, fairies, brownies" belonging to an oral, especially female tradition of storytelling, often in song, his reception of which Burns credits to their old housemaid (Bennett 7). Besides the "Little People" of the brownies (131), "the night-hag" (128) and the "poor little devil" of the dreamer (128) also appear in Stevenson's "A Chapter on Dreams."

The duality inherent in Douglas's line, of Brownies and Bogles, was taken up, for example, by the English Victorian writer of children's fiction, Juliana Horatia Ewing. In textbook Victorian fashion, she identified the brownies with well-behaved children who help in the household and the children who do not live up to this Victorian ideal as boggarts, another variant of the Scottish bogle and English boggle. In

Ewing's tale "The Brownies" (1871), the oldest son of a tailor realises he can be a brownie himself after talking to a wise "Old Owl" (35). When the grandmother tells the children of the brownie that used to live in the household, they ask "Did they give him any wages, Granny?" (30). Even before Stevenson, the invisible Brownie could function as a mythological figure of productivity under the conditions of wage capitalism, a theme that occupied Stevenson considerably when he became a commercially successful author.

The Scottishness of the Brownie and his connection to the double is particularly apparent in the most important writer of doubles in Scotland before Stevenson, James Hogg. Even before the appearance of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Hogg's first novel, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818), combines his interests in the history and legends of seventeenth-century Scottish Covenanters by using the Brownie as a mythological persona behind which the Presbyterian Covenanter leader, John Brown (sic), can hide (see, e.g., Leonardi): there are no real Brownies in Hogg's novel, but they have an effect on the story-world and, by implication, on Scottish history. As Ian Duncan argues, Hogg's first novel enacts a particular type of Scottishness that negotiates with Englishness and tends towards political independence. In the novel, Duncan maintains, "Hogg comes very close here to investing his fairy world with a political allegory of national independence" (193). Again, Hogg's Brownie is invested with the ambiguity of the Brownie vs. Bogle/Boggart: in an example of "nuanced characterisation," the manuscript of *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* calls the Brownie "wicked *and* benevolent" (Snodgrass, n.p.; emphasis added). Interestingly, Hogg's novel contains, relegated to a parenthesis, an anagnorisis like the one of the dreamer as Stevenson in "A Chapter on Dreams"; the narrator states: "for this celebrated Brownie was no other than the noted Mr John Brown, the goodman of Caldwell" (vol. 2, 76). Not only by virtue of their folklore status as Scottish but more specifically as an echo of earlier literary texts, then, the Brownies, in the context of Stevenson's autocommentary, have a decisively Scottish aspect with a transatlantic impact. Viewed against this background, Stevenson's Brownies exhibit

specifically Scottish meanings of politics, history, and literary productivity that were nevertheless translatable to a US audience. Turning the Brownies into a comic double of his own writerly self in a North American commercial context, Stevenson playfully weaves a Scottish thread into the texture of the past.

5. Another Chapter of *Jekyll and Hyde*

Jekyll and Hyde famously predicts the future of man as "a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens" (48). This points us towards the idea of the Caledonian antisyzygy as a hallmark of Scottish national identity, an idea just as influential as resistant to obsolescence and one that is based on early twentieth-century literary historian Gregory Smith's idiosyncratic reading of Stevenson and Stevensoniana. Penny Fielding has argued that "Stevenson's imagination works by the dismantling of antitheses" (170). In such fashion, Stevenson's autocommentary playfully dismantles the antithesis of multiple and single authorship. In a strict analogy, the figure of the double would correspond to co-authorship shared by two writers, while multiple figures would point to multiple authorship. Yet Stevenson's "A Chapter on Dreams" —in similar fashion to *Jekyll and Hyde*—deconstructs such clear-cut oppositions, containing both multiple Brownies and a singular Brownie, with all of them depicted in relation to Stevenson, himself both unconscious dreamer and conscious writer.

The brownie, in contrast to other mythological and literary figures such as the fetch or the wraith or indeed the doppelgänger, offered Stevenson a comic and playful version of a human "double being" (136) that was especially apt for reflecting on the dreaming subconscious, and waking cerebration, and their role in literary creativity. The text is comical without becoming a parody of the process of literary composition: the comedy of authorship that Stevenson offers in his theatre of the brain offers genuine insights. As such, "A Chapter on Dreams" stands as a significant example of the nineteenth-century literary autocommentary, even as it becomes another chapter of the novella, adding

a supplementary, eleventh part that offers a comic double to the Gothic strangeness and tragic ending of *Jekyll and Hyde*.[1]

LMU
Munich

NOTE

[1]For their helpful comments on previous papers and versions of this article, I wish to thank the two anonymous peer reviewers as well as the participants and organizers at the panel "Scottish Futurities" at Anglistiktag 2024, the 2024 Intertextual Stevenson conference, and Reading Scotland in 2025.

WORKS CITED

Arata, Stephen. "Stevenson and Fin-De-Siècle Gothic." *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Louis Stevenson*. Ed. Penny Fielding. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2010. 53-69.

Bennett, Margaret. "The Roots of Living Tradition." *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Traditional Literatures*. Ed. Sarah Dunnigan and Suzanne Gilbert. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013. 7-13.

Berensmeyer, Ingo. *Author Fictions: Narrative Representations of Literary Authorship Since 1800*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023.

Brantlinger, Patrick. *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1999.

Cobbe, Frances Power. "Unconscious Cerebration." *Macmillan's Magazine* 133 (November 1870): 24-37.

Douglas, Gavin. "Virgil's Aeneid Translated into Scottish Verse." *Printed for the Scottish Text Society*, 1950-1964. xtf.lib.virginia.edu/xtf/view?docId=chadwyck_ep/uvaGenText/tei/chep_1.2225.xml

Duncan, Ian. *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2008.

Ewing, Juliana Horatio. *The Brownies and Other Tales*. Illus. George Cruikshank. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1871.

Fielding, Penny. "Robert Louis Stevenson." *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Literature*. Ed. Gerard Carruthers and Liam McIlvanney. Cambridge: CUP, 2013. 159-72.

Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Ed. Jane E. Lewin. Cambridge: CUP, 1997.

Guttzeit, Gero. "Authoring Monsters: Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe and Early Nineteenth-Century Figures of Gothic Authorship." *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 54.3 (2018): 279-92.

Guttzeit, Gero. *The Figures of Edgar Allan Poe: Authorship, Antebellum Literature, and Transatlantic Rhetoric*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017.

Henderson, Lizanne. Folk Belief and Scottish Traditional Literatures. *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Traditional Literatures*. Ed. Sarah Dunnigan and Suzanne Gilbert. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013. 26-34.

Hogg, James. *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*. Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1818.

Huxley, T. H. "On the Hypothesis That Animals Are Automata, and Its History." *Nature* 10, 253 (1874): 362-66.

Leonardi, Barbara. "James Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*: An Unconventional National Tale." *Studies in Scottish Literature* 42.1 (2016): 49-67.

McCracken-Flesher, Caroline. *Doctor Dissected: A Cultural Autopsy of the Burke and Hare Murders*. Oxford: OUP, 2012.

Murfin, Audrey. *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Art of Collaboration*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2019.

Murnane, Barry. "Doppelganger." *The Ashgate Encyclopedia of Literary and Cinematic Monsters*. Ed. Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock. Farnham: Ashgate, 2013. 172-77.

"Notes." *The Critic*. 10 Sept. 1887, p. 133. https://archive.org/details/sim_critic_1887-09-10_8/page/132/mode/2up. 4 Feb. 2026.

Poe, Edgar Allan. "The Philosophy of Composition." 1846. *Essays and Reviews*. Ed. Gary Richard Thompson. New York: The Library of America, 1984. 13-25.

Proctor, Richard. "Have We Two Brains?" *Cornhill Magazine* 31.182 (February 1875): 149-66.

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus: The 1818 Text*. Ed. Nick Groom. Oxford: OUP, 2019.

Snodgrass, Charles. "Fairies, Faith, and Fatherland in James Hogg's 'The Brownie of Bodsbeck.'" *The Bottle Imp* 20 (2016).

Stevenson, Robert Louis. "A Chapter on Dreams." *R. L. Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical Essays*. Ed. Glenda Norquay. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2009. 126-28.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. Ed. Katherine Linehan. London: Norton, 2003.

Stevenson, Robert Louis. *The Letters*. Ed. by Sidney Colvin. Vol. 2. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899.

Stiles, Anne. *Popular Fiction and Brain Science in the Late Nineteenth Century*. Cambridge: CUP, 2012.

Swearingen, Roger G. *The Prose Writings of Robert Louis Stevenson: A Guide*. London: Macmillan, 1980.