Schweighauser's book negotiate deception as a response to shifts in the social order as well as to reconsiderations of the role of the arts.

Philip Schweighauser's study will certainly be interesting to all scholars and students working in the broad field of aesthetics as well as to those reading American art history and literature. It is highly readable while also having a strong theoretical backbone, welcoming readers to contemplate the aesthetic turn of the early American Republic on a deeper level and bringing them to a more comprehensive understanding of its implications. *Beautiful Deceptions* is an outstanding contribution, offering new and illuminating insights into the literary world of the early American era and delineates how American artists "situated their work within the transnational process of functional differentiation" (181).

Michaela Keck. 2018. *Deliberately Out of Bounds: Women's Work on Classic Myth in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction*. Heidelberg: Winter, 363 pp., € 45.00.

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From its very first lines, the concise introduction to *Deliberately Out of Bounds* signals the book's revisionist intent, as Michaela Keck sets out to question two common assumptions regarding myth. The first is that rewritings of myths by women writers entail the furious liberation of repressed energies and call for psychoanalytical readings. Second, myth cannot help but perpetrating patriarchal narratives. In response to the first common assumption, Keck presents the rewriting of myths as a legitimate means for women to articulate not only their inner tensions, but also aesthetic and socio-political preoccupations. By publishing their mythical rewritings, women authors do invite "the unknown and the uncanny" (51) into public discourse, but for the purpose of social critique and collective regeneration. As to the second point, in the wake of philosophers Aby Warburg and Hans Blumenberg, Keck understands myth as open to orthodox as well as unorthodox readings, containing the seeds of perpetual regenerations and limitless reversals. It is in this endless chain of visions and revisions that Keck collocates the work of her women authors, who do not retrieve narratives that were lost and needed recovery, but continue the work of mythmaking, which thrives of endless re-embodiments. In this sense, they are not *retellers*, but *makers*

of myth: to use Keck's term, they are revisionist mythmakers. Keck has little interest in framing her white upper- and middle-class authors as subversives, she prefers to identify their genre of choice as such.

In chapter two, "Myth, *Pathos Formulae*, and Women's Revisionist Mythmaking", Keck evokes the concept of *pathos formulae* as an embodiment of the fluidity or myth and as a guiding template for her analysis. In Aby Warburg's understanding, *pathos formulae* are recurring figurations that synthesize and mediate ever-recurring polarities between affect and intellect, terror and logos, irrationality and reason (see 26). As embodiments of human passions, these archetypes are inherited across generations, whose lived experience they continue to express. Keck's authors employ *pathos formulae* to produce highly relatable works of immediate emotional impact, and by so doing, they blur the boundaries between high and low culture, articulate poignant social critique, imagine and promote moral reform, explore and project feminine experiences, and, most interestingly, give body and voice to collective cultural memory. The relationship between mythmaking and women authors is mutually beneficial, Keck argues. On the one hand, they nourish the poignancy of myth and of *pathos formulae*, on the other, they use the cultural capital associated with classicism to "give prominence, authority, and significance" (54) to their own voices in a patriarchal system that would otherwise be unreceptive. At the same time, Keck pertinently argues that, through what she calls the "unleashing of difference" (52), mythmaking from a marginalized or 'Othered' group reverses the functioning of myth, which is supposed to protect humanity from the (social) evils that surround them, not unleash them. In other words, myth's function is to rationalize calamities, not to make people even more painfully aware of them. Nineteenth-century women authors, however, assume the function of Nietzsche's Nabi, who delivers his (or, in this case, her) prophecies with much wailing and lamentations. At this point, the reader cannot but think of the American Jeremiad as a more immediate interpretive frame than Nietzsche's *Nabi*, but the question will receive more attention below.

In her first analytical chapter, "Dionysian Frenzy in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's *A New England Tale*" Keck delves into her first *pathos formula*, the maenad. In her debut novel, Sedgwick uses the maenad "as a release mechanism to positively affirm [...] supposedly dangerous and excessive mythical-magical energies" (67). Much of the chapter's analytical energy is channeled in reading of the novel through the prism of the Nietzschean dualism between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Keck anticipates the skeptical reader when she warns that the use of Nietzsche may seem "a daring and anachronistic approach" (77), but her engagement with Nietzschean philosophy is enthralling in its elegance: even the inevitable discrepancies between Nietzsche's and Sedgwick's conceptual universes are convincingly woven into the argument and used in its favor.

Far from questioning the pertinence of the Nietzschean reading, I found myself wondering about the novel's interrelations with the more immediate American philosophical landscape. As the chapter nears its end, Keck argues that the novel contributes to the invention and construction of the Second Great Awakening (see 111), a possibility that this chapter, with its discussion of enthusiastic religiosity, hints at but does not unfold in its full potential. The following sections, however, satisfy this reader's curiosity about Sedgwick's engagement with the tropes of the nascent American sensitivity. In a section that unveils the protofeminist quality of this novel, for example, Keck scrutinizes the foundational impact of the novel's "women figures in nature" (107) on a tradition of female American romanticism, within which women traverse the wilderness without replicating the civilizational impetus that marks (male) frontier accounts, but experience it through the "tremendous physicality and sensuality" of *Eros* and *Thanatos* narratives (107).

Keck's book is eloquent in all its parts, but it is chapter four, "The Trials of Psyche: Ancient Mysteries in Lydia Maria Child's *Philothea*" that I found the most powerful. The chapter opens on the note of subversion, specifically on a response to literary critic Cornelius C. Felton's dismissal of Child's novel as one that failed at achieving the noble serenity required of the classics. But Joachim Winckelmann's assessment of the classics as infused with 'noble simplicity and calm greatness' is another assumption that Keck's revisionist mythmakers seek to complicate. Keck clarifies that in *Philothea*, as well as in the other novels analyzed in this book, myth is protest and spasm, not stasis or tranquility. Here the author's tone veers distinctly towards agitation – intended as feminist 'agitation' and subversion – and it also engages more vigorously with American themes. The chapter proposes a reading of Philothea through the *pathos formula* of Psyche and understands the novel to juxtapose and interconnect the immaterial and the material. I immensely appreciated Keck's excursus into material culture studies when she explains the sumptuously tactile quality of Child's novel, populated by a variety of objects and textiles so richly described to become palpable. This serves as stepping stone for a discussion of Orientalism, which Keck locates in this "profusion of collectibles" (129). Keck protects Child from dismissive Orientalist readings by arguing that Orientalist descriptions contribute to meaningful renderings of an idealized Greece. When the reader begins to suspect that Keck may go to much too great lengths to 'save' her authors, she critiques *Philothea*'s "powerful world of female goddesses" as one that "exists within the boundaries of patriarchal rule" (139). Keck acknowledges that Philothea's desire to abide to rules "weakens her matriarchal potential" (139) but also reflects on Child's female characters as social equals to men, bearing an equal share of social responsibility. At this point the reader is eager to position Philothea within the genealogy of

American characters forced to face the divide between laws of the individual and the laws of the state, from Huckleberry Finn to Thoreau's narrators; she even wonders to what extent Philothea is a foremother to Whitman's and Emerson's call to take the gentle nudging of one's inner voice as a manifestation of the divine and the only course of action to follow, as one's heart as the site of the soul, of mystic thought, and of one's power (see 145).

Chapter Six, "Isiac Womanhood in Elizabeth Stuat Phelps's *The Story of Avis*", centers on the 1877 novel as a rewriting of the myth of Isis and Osiris. The book fits comfortably in the genre of revisionist mythmaking presented by the author, as it narrates women as "no longer bound to domestic labor, but [...] intellectually and economically independent as well as morally redemptive agent[s]" (282). The protagonist, a spiritualized but also intensely sensual woman artist (not unlike Child's Philothea), is infused with the Isiac powers of creation, resurrection, and transformation. Great attention is given to Avis/Isis's theriomorphic manifestations, mostly bird- and catlike, which Keck reads as an indication of the protagonist's interrelatedness with nature and with an ancient matriarchal order. Keck's analysis of Avis's unfinished masterpiece, a painting of the sphynx, is worth noting. The relationship of silent communion and sisterly understanding between Avis and the traditionally female Sphynx adds to the feminist ambitions of the novel, as it functions as a counterpoint to "the male tradition of Romantic and Transcendentalist writers and thinkers" (229) who saw in the sphinx a lethal threat and monstrous opponent. In accordance with Keck's concern with the pictorial, the chapter on Avis is also intensely visual. The analysis lingers on the significance of moving panoramas, china vases, hieroglyphic iconography, and floral and faunal ornaments in the economy of the novel, confirming the author's sensibility for the visual and her dedication to communicating the luxurious vivacity of images.

The book ends darkly on Louisa May Alcott's *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877), a rather pessimistic moral tale where the transcendental beauty and complete vulnerability of the mythical Galatea resurface in Alcott's heroine, Gladys. With her nymph-like qualities, Gladys combines the affinity with "natural energies" and the Platonic "harmony of the spheres" (298) typical of the nymphs with their proximity with nature and the earth. Similar to Avis, Gladys becomes the vehicle for a gynocentric spirituality. The darker hues of this chapter are crucial to collocate revisionist mythmaking in the American literary landscape: the psychological and physical violence in Glady's life trajectory, as well as her death, anticipate the ambivalent feminist visions of Charlotte Perkins Gilman or Kate Chopin, for whom the way towards emancipation was also one paved with sorrow, and inevitably conducive to death or insanity. "The emancipatory work on myth", Keck notes in her conclusion, "is not a unanimously optimistic affair" (330).

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