

BOOK REVIEW

Night Watches - Inventions on the Life of Maria Mitchell

Carole Oles, 1985, 72 pages. ISBN 0-914086-56-1 cloth \$12.95; ISBN 0-914086-57-X paper \$6.95. Alice James Books, 138 Mount Auburn Street, Cambridge, MA 02138, USA.

Imagination, like scientific insight, gains its greatest force when it has been launched from a strong grounding in reality. So the "inventions" in the title of this book should not dissuade the reader who has grown wary of modern poetry. Carole Oles' inventions on the life of Maria Mitchell show in every line a careful study of the 19th century astronomer's letters, diaries, and observing notebooks. One can feel in these poems Carole Oles' own growing sense of discovery - the excitement and awe that come with discovery - as she traces, and sometimes must extrapolate, the track of a life that she finds both strangely remote from, and startlingly akin to, her own:

Once a man's voice pierced the dark - "Miss
what are you doing there?" - shook my sight.
Spiders, ticks, even rats had visited, but no
person until he made his arboreal ascent
to find out what lone women do so late
on rooftops, with only sky for cover.

Mister, with nature's consent I climb to sight,
to know the heavens. Later I must sleep. Here
are comets to discover.

- from "Miss Mitchell's Comet"

This struggle to "climb to sight" is the overriding concern throughout **Night Watches**. It is a concern which drives astronomer and poet alike, and which exists in some measure in everyone who lives between these poles of the "greatest of sciences" and the "greatest of arts." The difficulty in the 19th century was most severe for Maria Mitchell, who, for example, had won recognition by the King of Denmark before any of her own countrymen would acknowledge her for scientific accomplishment. And, despite the fact that 19th century Nantucket was one of the few places in the country where women were free to assume roles of intellectual and social leadership without derision, Maria nonetheless had to pay the price of being looked at as two people - a mind within a body - as Oles retells a historical anecdote in a poem called "Rough Passage":

...two island women in the corner
took up a conversation, "I suppose
Maria Mitchell did some big things -
people say so - but she is awfully homely!"
"Well, yes" hesitates the other "she is,
but you must admit she has fine eyes."

which I kept shut upon the things
that people say: the pitch, the roll...

If isolation and alienation must be the price of self-determination, it is also fitting that Carole Oles weaves into these poems the contrasting elements of "trespass" and "intrusion." In the obvious sense, Maria might be seen as the intruder into a traditionally male intellectual realm. But in a much subtler sense, it is the cold-hearted and often hypocritical world of a social and intellectual status-quo that Maria Mitchell has to contend with. That obstinate world had interfered with the determination of one woman to remain true to herself.

Dr. Dorrit Hoffleit, writing of Cecilia Payne-Gaposchkin (1984, **Sky & Telescope** 68, 225), has quoted from Maria Mitchell a passage that is a central idea in Oles' **Night Watches**:

Until women throw off reverence for authority they will not develop. When they do this, when they come to truth through their own investigations, when doubts lead them to discovery, the truth they get will be theirs, and their minds will go on and on unfettered.

Maria Mitchell, the "pioneer American woman astronomer," was neither the first nor the last person to have to fight against intellectual and social prejudice, yet it seems very appropriate the Carole Oles has presented Maria Mitchell in these pages as a symbol of persistence that we are not asked to look up to, but that we are made to feel compelled to discover alive within ourselves.

Michael Saladyga
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* * * * *

ERRATUM

In Volume 14, Number 2, the Table of Observers 1984-1985 (Table III of the Director's Report) contained a number of errors. The corrected table is reprinted on the following pages. We extend an apology to those observers whose totals were printed incorrectly in Volume 14.

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**THE
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OF THE
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF VARIABLE STAR OBSERVERS**

**Volume 15, Number 2
1986**

75th Anniversary Edition

VARIABLE STAR SYMPOSIUM

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- Jones, W. T. 1965a, *Month. Not. Roy. Astron. Soc.* 120, 23.
 _____ 1965b, *Journ. Amer. Assoc. Var. Star Obs.* 9, 96.
 Lee, T. and Stein, W. A. 1968, *Astrophys. Journ.* 152, 21.

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MGT R. MCGWIER, AL	3- 2	PZA*A. PEREZ-REVILLA,FRANCE	4220- 3
MKJ J. F. MCKENNA, NJ	1152- 46	PFK F. PESCI, ITALY	701- 1
MBC B. P. MCMILLAN, NC	788	PSO S. PESCI, ITALY	760- 6
MRH R.H. MCNAUGHT,AUSTRALIA	23- 13	PSH S. H. PETERS, MI	5
MHT T. MCNINCH, IL	5	PED D. B. PETTENGILL, FL	1925- 34
MIB I. B. MEDIAS, NORWAY	358	PIJ~J. PIRITI, HUNGARY	183
MED K. J. MEDWAY, ENGLAND	3350	PWR R. E. POWASKI, OH	46
MDG D. L. MEGGINSON, MO	47	PRG G. PROSSER, S. AFRICA	143
MFR F. MELILLO, NY	23	RHT H. RAUSCHKA, AUSTRIA	127
MHI H. I. MENALI, TURKEY	145	REP P. REINHARD, AUSTRIA	45
MNZ E. MENEGUZZO, ITALY	44	RNT C. C. REINHART, OH	10
MEN P. T. MENOHER, CT	25	RRC R. C. REISENWEBER, PA	88
MPY P. MEYERS, S. AFRICA	234	REN*J. RENAULT, FRANCE	233
MEZ~C. MEZOSI, HUNGARY	214- 16	RJI J. I. RIGGS, NY	1439- 102
MOK O. MIDTSKOGEN, DENMARK	362- 21	RSB S. RITTERBUSH, MA	2
MTL R. E. MILTON, CA	168- 4	RBY B. J. ROBERTS, MS	3
MJI J. R. MINER, IN	328	ROP*A. RODRIQUEZ, FRANCE	66
MPJ P. J. MINNECI JR., IL	2	RJM J. C. ROEMMELT, MI	5
MIS*J. MINOIS, FRANCE	202	RB D. W. ROSEBRUGH, FL	456
MUK U. MITRA, INDIA	75	ROG G. M. ROSS, MI	94- 7
MZS~A. MIZSER, HUNGARY	2881- 32	RMV M. V. ROWE, TX	25
MMI M. MOELLER, W. GERMANY	69	RR R. E. ROYER, CA	52- 4
MOD D. G. MOHRBACHER, OH	57	RPH H. RUMBALL-PETRE, CA	18
MAR R. MONELLA, ITALY	40- 23	RAN A. RUTTER, NY	7
MDE D. R. MONGER, FL	184	SJD J. D. SABIA, PA	16
MPT P. MONIOT, CO	1	SJC J. C. SADOW, LA	78
MOR R. L. MONSKE, PA	524- 5	SGT~T. SAGODI, HUNGARY	117

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SAH G. SAMOLYK, WI	1684		THU*B. THOUET, FRANCE	564
SSR R. SAMPSON, CANADA	391		TBC B. TIC, CANADA	460
SVT T. G. SAVILLE, ENGLAND	530		TFN F. N. TRAYNOR, AUSTRALIA	19
SSC S. M. SCHIMPF, CA	8		TGW&G. TREMONTI, NETHERLANDS	18
SMF F. SCHMIDT, NY	302		TDM D. M. TROIANI, IL	1126- 7
SRD R. H. SCHMIDT, MN	26		TJC J. C. TRUAX, MI	43
SCY A. SCHROYENS, BELGIUM	133		TUB~V. TUBOLY, HUNGARY	24
SDH D. SCHROYENS, BELGIUM	29		TUC C. TURK, S. AFRICA	66
SCZ*E. SCHWEITZER, FRANCE	3599-	88	TNL N. J. TURNER, AUSTRALIA	40
SCE C. E. SCOVIL, CT	3130-1392		TYS R. L. TYSON, NY	222
SEZ*J. SEGONZAT, FRANCE	165		UND G. E. UNDERHAY, CA	137- 1
SEE E. H. SEIFERT JR., NE	15		VFR F. VACLIK, CZECHOSLOVAKIA	140
SEN&P. SERNE, NETHERLANDS	95		VAI*J. VAIDIS, FRANCE	118
SEJ J. L. SEVERINO, PANAMA	9		VCP P. VAN CAUTEREN, BELGIUM	32- 2
SHS S. B. SHARPE, CANADA	2122-	59	VNL F. R. VAN LOO, BELGIUM	125- 9
SSA A. P. SHARPLESS, WA	47		VWS J. VANWASSENHOVE, BELGIUM	97
SSV S. SHERVAIS JR., CA	2		VPL P. VARELA, ARGENTINA	18
SNW J. W. SHIPMAN, NM	83-	1	VED*P. VEDRENNE, FRANCE	3707
SLH L. J. SHOTTER, PA	79-	1	VEL P. Y. E. VELASCO, SPAIN	24
SKL K. SIMMONS, FL	2		VRG R. VENNE, CANADA	97- 1
SNE N. A. SIMMONS, WI	303-	109	VET*M. VERDENET, FRANCE	6208-3237
SKW W. SIMMONS, FL	2		VIA*J. VIALLE, FRANCE	585
SBS S. SINGER-BREWSTER, CA	10-	5	VIN J. V. VINCENT, ZIMBABWE	65
SKK A. L. SKERKER, VA	134		VGJ G. J. VINCI, CT	35
SOF O. SKJAERAASEN, NORWAY	57		WGJ G. A. WAFFEN, OH	9
SMI A. L. SMITH, ENGLAND	483-	5	WKP P. R. WALKER, VT	187
SHA H. A. SMITH, MI	28		WND*D. WALLIAN, FRANCE	39
SJE J. C. SMITH, CA	32		WMJ&J. WARMERDAM, NETHERLANDS	26
SMQ M. S. SMITH, AZ	205		WER R. J. WEBER, KS	22
SRQ R. K. SMITH, ENGLAND	53		WCB C. B. WEBSTER, PA	197- 7
SJZ J. SPEIL, POLAND	480		WEH K. R. WEHNER, MO	6
SPO J. SPONGSVEEN, NORWAY	199		WEI D. D. WEIER, WI	1169- 348
SC C. E. SPRATT, CANADA	121		WC R. E. WEND, IL	799- 1
SPG N. G. SPRYN, MD	16		WEF F. R. WEST, MD	1037
STR R. H. STANTON, CA	222-	184	WTJ J. E. WEST, TX	258
SKS T. STECKNER, CANADA	92-	7	WYT T. A. WEYENBERG, WI	845
STI P. STEFFEY, CA	16		WHI S. L. WHITNEY, RI	12
SGP P. E. STEGMANN, NJ	72		WAM A. R. WICHMAN, CT	4
SET C. STEPHAN, FL	423-	25	WFK F. P. WILKIN, CT	15
STF G. STEPHANOPOULOS, GREECE	858		WI D. B. WILLIAMS, IN	2301
SDR R. D. STEPHENS, CA	45-	24	WDJ D. J. WILLIAMS, TN	4
SWT R. J. STEWART, NJ	218		WLP P. WILS, BELGIUM	622- 43
STQ N. STOIKIDIS, GREECE	127		WJA J. A. WILSON, MO	724
SBB E. A. STUBBLEFIELD, VA	6		WSN T. W. WILSON, WV	926- 326
SGM M. D. SUGARMAN, CA	3		WNB B. I. WINGATE, NJ	1894- 16
HUO D. J. SVENTEK, TX	8		WCL C. L. WOMACK, TX	1110
SVN P. L. SVENTEK, TX	870		YRK D. O. YORK, CA	307- 9
SZU~B. SZABO, HUNGARY	98		YLD L. D. YOUNG JR., NJ	4
SOZ~L. SZANTHO, HUNGARY	135		YOR R. O. YOUNG, LA	5
SKB~B. SZOKE, HUNGARY	29		YON R. R. YOUNG, PA	100
TZR R. G. TANZER, NJ	26		ZAG~G. ZAJACZ, HUNGARY	501
TDR D. R. TAYLOR, CA	6		ZLT~T. ZALEZSAK, HUNGARY	189- 3
THE*S. THEBAULT, FRANCE	11		ZAM M. ZANOTTA, ITALY	140- 11
TM H. D. THOMAS, WA	20		ZWT&W.T. ZANSTRA, NETHERLANDS	11
THR R. R. THOMPSON, CANADA	122		ZPA P. A. ZELLER, IN	162
TRB R. THOMSEN, ARGENTINA	222		ZRE R. E. ZISSELL, MA	460- 95

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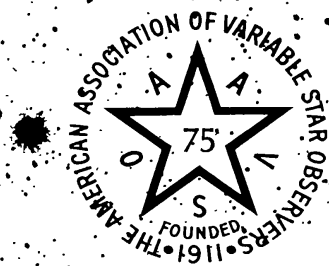
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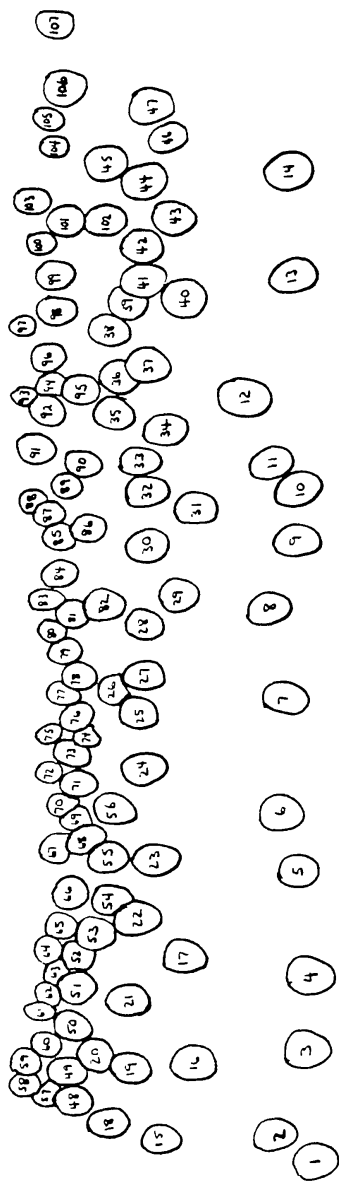
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75TH ANNUAL MEETING



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AAVSO 75th Anniversary Meeting

Dedication of the Clinton B. Ford Astronomical Data and Research Center

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Attendees at the 75th Anniversary Meeting, Pound Hall, Harvard University Law School, Cambridge, Massachusetts, August 6 - 10, 1986. A Key to the photograph is on the preceding page. Photo by Douglas Danskin.

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