Journal of Humanistic Mathematics

Volume 3 | Issue 2 July 2013

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Recommended Citation

Long, L. "The Taste of Mathematics: Caroline Herschel at 31," *Journal of Humanistic Mathematics*, Volume 3 Issue 2 (July 2013), pages 148-. DOI: 10.5642/jhummath.201302.14 . Available at: http://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/vol3/iss2/14

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JHM is an open access bi-annual journal sponsored by the Claremont Center for the Mathematical Sciences and published by the Claremont Colleges Library | ISSN 2159-8118 | http://scholarship.claremont.edu/jhm/

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Laura Long

After dinner, William cuts the pie into pieces
and teaches me to calculate the moon's orbit
when he removes one slice, then another.

Pencil and paper replace my fork and plate.
Which constellation is visible on a certain midnight
from our spot on earth–the swan, the lynx, the twins?

He teaches me to figure spheres and vectors
already discerned by calculating men.
I am to be a calculating woman. His eyes gleam

as I get more answers right. "One more, Lina,"
he says. "You must get this right or else
you can't have a slice of pie." I get it right,

and I could devour a dozen gooseberry pies
a day without him knowing the difference.
Still, this pie tickles my tongue like no other:

cinnamon of logarithm,
    clove of conjunction,
        nutmeg of pi.

Postscript:

This poem is from a chapbook, *The Eye of Caroline Herschel: A Life in Poems,* forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

Caroline described her brother William teaching her mathematics in this manner–after supper, and with playful threats to withhold dessert–so that she could assist him in his new-found career of astronomy, in which they both soon excelled.

Other poems from this chapbook appear in the journals *32 Poems, Astropoetica: Mapping the Stars Through Poetry,* and *WomenArts Quarterly.* Research for the project was supported by the Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin and Lynchburg College.