

Audition Piece for Thomasina Coverly

Thomasina: A gibe is not a rebuttal.

You are churlish with me because mama is paying attention to your friend. Well, let them elope, they cannot turn back the advancement of knowledge. I think it is an excellent discovery. Each week I plot your equations dot for dot, x s against y s in all manner of algebraical relation, and every week they draw themselves as commonplace geometry, as if the world of forms were nothing but arcs and angles. God's truth, Septimus, if there is an equation for a curve like a bell, there must be an equation for one like a bluebell, and if a bluebell, why not a rose? Do we believe nature is written in numbers?

Septimus: We do.

Thomasina: Then why do your equations only describe the shapes of manufacture?

Septimus: I do not know.

Thomasina: Armed thus, God could only make a cabinet.

Septimus: He has a mastery of equations which lead into infinities where we cannot follow.

Thomasina: What a faint heart! We must work outward from the middle of the maze. We will start with something simple. (She picks up the apple leaf). I will plot this leaf and deduce its equation. You will be famous for being my tutor when Lord Byron is dead and forgotten

Septimus: (*firmly*) Back to Cleopatra.

Thomasina: Is it Cleopatra? – I hate Cleopatra!

Septimus: You hate her? Why?

Thomasina: Everything is turned to love with her. New love, absent love, lost love – I never knew a heroine that makes such noodles of our sex. It only needs a Roman general to drop anchor outside the window and away goes the empire like a christening mug into a pawn shop. If Queen Elizabeth had been a Ptolemy history would have been quite different – we would be admiring the pyramids of Rome and the great Sphinx of Verona.

Septimus: God save us.

Thomasina: But instead, the Egyptian noodle made carnal embrace with the enemy who burned the great library of Alexandria without so much as a fine for all that is overdue. Oh, Septimus! – can you bear it? All the lost plays of the Athenians! Two hundred at least by Aesculus, Sophocles, Euripides – thousands of poems – Aristotle's own library brought to Egypt by the noodle's ancestors! How can we sleep for grief?