

australian.
script
centre

TALES OF GALILEO

OBSERVATION, REVOLUTION &
A LEAP OF FAITH

by Alana Valentine

EXTRACT

This script is distributed by the
Australian Script Centre, trading
as australianplays.org

77 Salamanca Place Hobart
7004 Tasmania Australia

admin@australianplays.org
<http://australianplays.org>
Tel +61 3 6223 4675
Fax +61 3 6223 4678

© 2009 Alana Valentine

Observation

Copyright © Alana Valentine 2009

sydney
observatory
PART OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

 national science week 2009



An Australian Government Initiative

INT. GRAND HOME - DAY

The door of an ornate, 19th Century cupboard, creaks open and a man, GALILEO GALILEI, emerges.

In one corner a woman, CAROLINE HERSHEL, sits at a piano, tinkering with the keys. As GALILEO continues to scan the room, he sees a large telescope set up, pointing out the window. He walks over to inspect the instrument. The woman stops playing the keys.

GALILEO May I?

CAROLINE Of course.

GALILEO *looks through the telescope.*

GALILEO This is fine instrument.

CAROLINE Yes. I discovered a comet with it only moments ago.

He looks at her, very dubious. She stands, looks through the telescope, moves it a little to the left and gestures that he should look through. He does and then pulls back, aghast.

GALILEO Are you a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society?

CAROLINE No. Not at all. Women are barred from membership.

GALILEO And yet you have found a comet.

CAROLINE No, sir. (Pause) I have found eight.

GALILEO Eight!

CAROLINE Yes. But I would have made a wonderful singer.

She returns to the piano and begins again to tinker. He goes over to her.

GALILEO But what have you pondered of their nature madame? Do comets return? Do they refuel the Sun and other stars?

CAROLINE I have no idea. My brother William told me to find comets, so I have. I have no interest in their nature. I have also remapped the British Catalogue of stars into zones of similar north pole distances, correcting Flamsteed's errors and lately I have done the same with all the nebulae, cataloguing them by north polar distance and in order of right ascension.

Almost distractedly, she hands GALILEO two books. He looks at them, intrigued.

GALILEO What is your name?

1.

Revolution

Copyright © Alana Valentine 2009

sydney
observatory
PART OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

 national science week 2009



An Australian Government Initiative

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

CHARLES DARWIN *is working in his garden when GALILEO emerges from behind a bush.*

DARWIN Good morning.

GALILEO Morning.

DARWIN Beautiful day.

GALILEO The wonder of God's creation.

DARWIN And the results of natural selection.

GALILEO What's that?

DARWIN Oh, it's an idea I had.

GALILEO A theory?

DARWIN Yes.

GALILEO A scientific theory?

DARWIN If you must know.

GALILEO Oh, I must. Explain it to me.

DARWIN Are you a biologist?

GALILEO An astronomer.

DARWIN Oh.

GALILEO What do you mean, Oh?

DARWIN To think like a biologist you need to be able to imagine yourself as an insect.

GALILEO That's alright, to think like an astronomer you need to be able to imagine yourself as an uncontrollable explosion of gas and dust.

DARWIN I sometimes feel like that in the mornings.

GALILEO Yes, as you get older.

DARWIN So, you're an insect.

GALILEO OK.

DARWIN Well?

A Leap of Faith

Copyright © Alana Valentine 2009

sydney
observatory
PART OF THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

 national science week 2009



An Australian Government Initiative

EXT. OBSERVATORY - DAY

GALILEO *stands looking up at NEWTON who is above him, on the Observatory balcony. He calls out to NEWTON.*

GALILEO You Sir?

NEWTON Yes?

GALILEO Would you do something for me?

NEWTON Allow me first to introduce myself, Sir.

GALILEO Of course.

NEWTON I am Isaac Newton. The Lucasian Professor of Mathematics.

GALILEO I'm sorry, I don't know of you.

NEWTON I was born in the year you died, sir.

GALILEO Well then. That would explain it.

NEWTON I would gladly do anything for the great Galileo Galilei.

GALILEO Thank you.

NEWTON What is it that you wish me to do, sir?

GALILEO Jump.

NEWTON Jump, Sir.

GALILEO Indeed.

NEWTON I fear I cannot do that, sir.

GALILEO Pray tell me, why not?

NEWTON Well, I fear that I might be injured or even killed by such a venture.

GALILEO Good sir, I am trying to establish the science of the motion of matter. Surely your own personal safety is irrelevant to such a venture.

NEWTON Do you think so?

GALILEO Certainly. But I am intrigued. You have not questioned the premise of my investigation.

NEWTON What is that sir?

GALILEO I asserted the motion of matter.