



*Axon: Creative Explorations*, Vol 11, No 1, July 2021

# UNLEARNING THE ROPES; EVIDENCE OF IMPROPRIETY; HOUSEHOLD SPEAK; FIRST ASTRONAUT ON JUPITER

Marc Vincenz

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## Unlearning the Ropes

'The Republic,' they say, 'must be upheld at all costs.' Thousands of fates are at stake, but almost no advice. 'What are your demands?' they say. 'Know we are prepared to serve any loss as long as you stay six feet away.' Her apathy is reflected in her face as she doles out soup and buttered bread. 'Which cloud?' she says scattering a handful of Parmesan. The old man sighs, remembering last summer when the bamboo reeds were green, remembering the abundance of bees. 'All of their prophecies come true,' he says blowing on his spoon.

## Evidence of Impropriety

Via the Via Canale, near the Orpieto, at the shore, an elephant passes by; on her head, ripe oranges in a golden bowl. A grandmother crosses the road as herself. 'Receive or transmit me,' she says. 'How can an elephant live in Italy without being lonely?' she says.

## Household Speak

The language she spoke was soft and uniform but unlike anything I had heard before. She called to mind my Great Aunt Lorelei; she who wore those soft summer roses everywhere. I wished I could decipher each nuance and phrase, each of her tongue movements and the

air in her mouth. Truth be told, as I later learned, what she said, although seemingly from another galaxy, some strange star constellation where every planet had two stars of its own, and to whom one hundred years was a thousand of our own. The twinned suns of the Holileese; and no, they had no laser guns or free speech. They lived in hollow chambers beneath the surface of their planet and they counted stars and sheep, just like us. Still, she spoke, uninterrupted, and her voice cast a shadow or a shade—whichever way one might look at it—‘Water is always level,’ I heard she had said, or I heard speak of such things. On the other hand, someone said, over another glass of cognac and a cigarette, ‘These things are often overblown. I hear she was a grass grower.’ ‘That would explain the tone,’ I said.

## First Astronaut on Jupiter

The glisten, listen,  
globular collusion,  
that crackle. In awe

at the waves of peroxide  
frothing, snorting  
across the shore.

A ring of stones  
immersed in a spiral  
of silence on fields of ice.

To be the very first stone.

and the sunlight faintly  
steals like a fox  
behind another ring of stones.

Your heart is torn  
as a fleeting moment  
of fire burns the atmosphere

from this Milky Way of young souls.  
*But where, you ask, is the driftwood  
picking up on the shore?*

and the surge of the sluggish

river winds down,  
slowing vapors, shadows ... Listen,

you can hear the years  
sifting through the bedrock,  
falling into the bottom

of ourselves  
while the earth  
thrusts quietly ahead.

and the murmur  
of her forest at night  
and the hollow walls of air,

the calls of the drunken dove,  
the ticking of ants  
moving their cities  
halfway across the world.

And, still as dragon clouds,  
these dawn waters, this land  
of untouched snows.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Marc Vincenz**

Marc Vincenz is an Anglo-Swiss-American poet, a fiction writer, translator, editor, publisher, designer, multi-genre artist and musician who has published fourteen books of poetry. His newest collection, *The Little Book of Earthly Delights*, and a novella set in ancient China, *Three Taos of Tao, or How to Catch a Fortuitous Elephant* are both forthcoming in 2021 from Spuyten Duyvil. An album of music, ambients and verse, *Left Hand Clapping*, is also forthcoming from TreeTorn Records. He has also published ten books of translations, most recently *Unexpected Development* by award-winning Swiss poet and novelist Klaus Merz (White Pine, 2018)—a finalist for the 2016 Cliff Becker Book Prize in Translation. His translation of Klaus Merz's selected poems, *An Audible Blue*, is forthcoming from White Pine Press. Vincenz is editor and publisher of MadHat Press, and publisher of *New American Writing*.

URL: <https://www.axonjournal.com.au/issue-111/unlearning-ropes-evidence-impropriety-household-speak-first-astronaut-jupiter>

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Published by  
The Centre for Creative & Cultural Research  
University of Canberra  
Canberra, Australia  
ISSN: 1838-8973