

# BUMBLY GOES FORTH



T E R E N C E  
B U M B L Y

Also by the author

*The Museum of Unnatural History*  
*The Missing Book*

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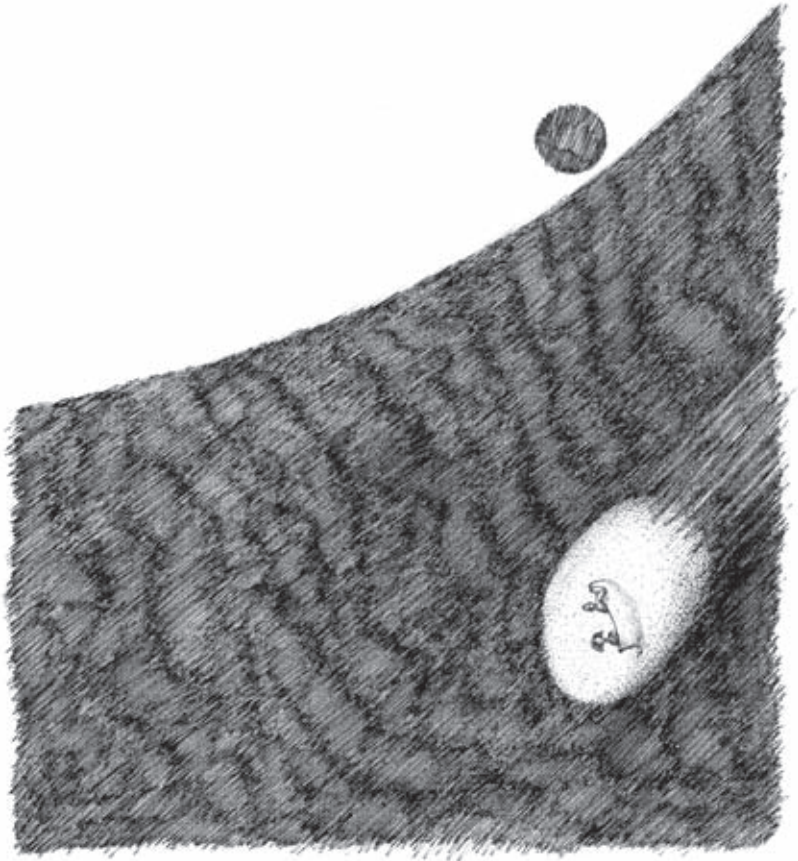


Plate 1: Terence Bumbly and Miss Sveldt, Day 0

## *Foreword*

To leave one's home planet is not a step one takes lightly.

For myself the decision to travel was one of life's little junctions, a choice between predictability and unpredictability. With the demise of the museum I had been curating, my lady, Ms Sveldt, and I were left with little to do and an enormous insurance payout. So, purchasing the latest model personal interstellar craft, a sleek cloudy ellipsoid known as an Egg™, Sveldt and I upped and left<sup>1</sup> Earth.

Travelling from the home-system across to the far side of the galaxy we travailed from solar system to solar system, planet to planet, to asteroids, remarkable bits of jetsam and all manner of creation. It wasn't simply a journey from point A to point B, but also from what I knew of humanity to what I could only speculate upon.

<sup>1</sup> Abdicated, abnegated, absented, absquatulated, beat it, blasted off, blew, cut out, decamped, departed, deserted, disappeared, dropped trow, emigrated, escaped, evacuated, exited, got away, got free, git, jetted, made feet, made like a tree, made ourselves scarce, marched out, migrated, moved on, moved out, parted, perished, pulled out, quit, removed, retired, sallied forth, said goodbye, scammed, seceded, set forth, shoved off, shut up shop, skidaddled, slipped away, split, started out, took leave, tergiversated, trooped, upped stumps, vacated, vanished, went away, went a' wanderin', went AWOL, went forth, withdraw, to seek greener pastures, gave the slip and left it all behind, exited stage left, adios muchachos, cut and run, off with the fairies, shook the dust off and made tracks.

As per my other books I have divided the following outpourings of thought into roughly defined segments with borders as shifty as a coastline.

We will progress in a number of ways, firstly outwards, as our proximity to Earth falls away in *Close to Home*; then further out the sections become astro-graphically more meaningless, instead grouping themselves into themes such as cultural development and variety within the diaspora, (*The Galactic Beast*); a brief overview of the one and only interstellar war, (*Casus Belli*); how the human-animal has changed in *Beyond, Before and Next to Human*; then we end our journey with a dip in the dubious waters of *Myths, Legends and Other Unverifiable Nonsense*.

Lastly, always intent on being upfront and facing forwards, I apologise in advance for any language, opinions or hypotheses that sit poorly with the reader, but such musings as these are primarily for amusement and any seriousness is unintentional and perhaps inserted by the reader him- or herself.

Dubitably yours

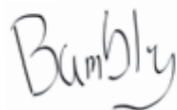




Plate 2: Sveldt without gravity

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Plate 3: Rahj reaches the edge of the galaxy

# PREFACE

At the time of our departure, Earth had a population of 20 billion bodies and 800,000 ‘entities’ (i.e. humans who have chosen a purely digital existence). A little crowded but not as dense as a mere century ago, before galactic colonization really began.

I think it’s important to note the history of how travel between galaxies has progressed since that time. The people of Earth, within the cradle of the Sol System, nestled in a pleasant space between the spiral arms towards the edge of the Milky Way<sup>1</sup>, performed little extra-terrestrial colonization except for scientific and commercial endeavours that, whilst establishing some manned outposts, did little to relieve a planet that was filled to bursting.

Of course, much knowledge was accumulated about the star-systems that could be used to ease the pressure but there was one thing holding back the human spread, and that was that no-one had done it before. Nobody had ever left the

1 The Birds’ Path, the Silver River, the River of Heaven or the Winter Street.

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traditional home to never return. Humanity is a monkey see, monkey do race but every now and then a monkey has to do something it hasn't seen before.

The first human to do so was none other than Rahj Hadid, an exceedingly ambiguous character, a homo-superior who had a fondness for the Dark Age fashions of pre-SIB Earthlings, keeping all the beauty his parents had sponsored for him hidden beneath animal skins, tinted eye-glasses and a helmet of exceptional eccentricity. He was a greatly bearded man, distemperate and by all accounts quite difficult to associate with. His reasoning for trekking to the farthest point in the galaxy was simply because 'somebody had to'.

I remember the news from when I was a little boy. My father and I were asleep under a tree when he was woken by a breaker-message. He concentrated on it for some moments then nodded and looked sort of ducky with a rare twist to his lips. 'Imagine that hey? A man at the edge of the galaxy ... Good for him.' Or something like that.

Once the precedent had been set, the flood



Plate 4: Rahj Hadid, galactic frontiersman

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began and a network of systems grew out from and around what became known as ‘Rahj’s Spine’. Rahj used over a hundred years of his life to plot the course—but the brochure we’re following says we should be able to make it to the edge within fourteen months.

Knowing he wouldn’t live long enough to get back to Earth for revitalisation, Rahj continued flying straight. The last message he sent back was ‘It was nice knowing you’, which has become a catch-cry for all those living and travelling on the spine. At Eris, the last stop before leaving the home-system, it appears on merchandise everywhere, and on departure they customarily take an image of you for historic record before bidding you a fond ‘It was nice knowing you.’

Sveldt joked that she should have said ‘I wish I could say the same’ before we teleported inside our Egg™ and sped away.

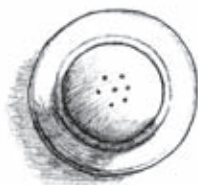


Plate 5: Two cruettes and a butterknife

# INTRODUCTION

There is an overarching theme to this collection of writings which I wish to address now by way of confession. It may be a condition that no human, or perhaps any consciousness, can avoid but nonetheless I wish to cleanse myself of the assumed notion of the author's attitude to his own correctness. I, Bumbly, am a simple man who coexists on hypotheses, contradictions and sometimes even delusions that lead me forwards and sometimes astray, but my sophism in no way makes me innocent of the great human burdens: apophenia and pareidolia<sup>1</sup>.

By definition pareidolia is a psychological phenomenon in humans: the habit of recognising something of significance in what is often random or chaotic sensorial data. An example of pareidolia is seeing images in clouds. Though there isn't really a jumping rabbit, a half-eaten meal, or a man in a tall hat, once you have interpreted the pattern on top of the sensory evidence you cannot help but continue to see that pattern. But it is

<sup>1</sup> While the two words are not exactly interchangeable I feel they relate to the same condition. Pareidolia is often used more specifically when referring to things perceived through the senses.

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of vital importance not to confuse experimental evidence as proof of a pattern. Despite how vigorously, and often offensively, people cite examples supporting their personal pareidolia (or apophe-  
nia), evidence will never be more than evidence, and evidence is not proof.

This tendency towards pattern-perception has been noted and studied for some time, such as in the 20th and 21st centuries with Rorschach tests, as a way of gaining insight into how the human mind in question is operating. It has been suggested that it was an evolutionary advantage to be able to recognise the human face instantaneously and as such humans by nature see faces in the most unlikely of places. From piles of rocks, landscapes, the moon and other alien landscapes to the accidental arrangement of these cruettes and a butter knife (Plate 5).

Far beyond the ability to interpret physical randomness and see faces everywhere, apophe-  
nia is linked to the human need to explain everything; it is also how the mind brings order to the chaos of information it is presented with over the course of its lifetime. Apophe-  
nia is how we live in the world, the patterns we identify and co-operate with, the

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classifications we make, enforce and obey. My own penchant for pareidolia is now seeing itself everywhere, from learning to psychology, history, behaviour *et cetera*, I have begun to see everything in terms of the pattern it is a part of. We ourselves are patterns, humanity a larger pattern, though one hard for us to perceive.

With the reader's permission—if permission not granted, do skip ahead—I would like to extrapolate further on this human tendency and suggest, somewhat hesitantly, that apophenia could be the basis for all thought. Our senses gather evidence and our minds join the dots, *a la* constellations. Beliefs, religions, sciences and pseudo-sciences all calibrate and debate on the strength of perceived patterns, only to crumble when forced to submit to a stronger and more convincing framework. Such is the way of the sciences, which are an endlessly replaceable progression of ideas, intentionally creating a combative arena for pattern-recognition to be revealed as either truth or chaos. The perception of these patterns inevitably causes a confusion of cause and effect, but connection is not explanation, and connection can be perceptually influenced if not initiated.

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So as not to leave the pincushion of my argument with a singular lonely point, I shall also add that our personal pareidolia binds our interpretation of the world. We see patterns in the actions of others and determine character; behind the events of the universal muddle some see an invisible hand, others a chain of unknowable cause and consequence. The very building blocks of our psychology, language and habits are derived from the successful application of the patterns we follow.

Here, where I will end it for now, only to rear it up now and again when citing examples; I would like to stress, and strain to stress, that reducing the knowledge of our society to one of pareidolic phenomena does not imply any incorrectness. Nor does it imply that the pattern is not there, but only that it may in time be superseded by a new pattern that reduces the old perception to illusion. That is to say, we must continue to have faith in what we believe, until the point when we believe something else. There is no shame in this, it is just the evolution of thought which we have long been party to.

I feel that if we as humans recognise that the

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majority of our behaviour and understanding was dictated by perceived patterns, we may be more open to the possibility of misperception and the seeking out of alternative patterns. The only reason I mention it is that the world could maybe do with a little less flagellation and fear of change.

**BUMBLY GOES  
F O R T H**

**T E R E N C E  
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