

Samples of JOTT (Phenomena of Spatial Discontinuities)

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It is only recently that spatial discontinuities have been proposed to constitute a distinguishable group of spontaneous effects. The term 'jott' has been given to this class of incidents, as they are usually dismissed as Just One of Those Things, inexplicable happenings that are brushed aside as false perceptions, failures of observation, mistaken memories, or just things that could not happen and therefore did not happen (and are best forgotten). Many such incidents do indeed merit that disposal. But some, on fair appraisal, appear to have indisputable reality and significant implications for our concepts of environmental stability and the relationship of mind to matter.

A 'jottle', by far the most frequently noted class of jott, is the unobserved relocation of an article: it is small, common articles, of the sort put in place with little purposeful intention, that are most often reported as either disappearing from a known location and later found in another place, or back in the same place, or are disconcertingly never seen again (to date). The incident is usually trivial in the context of practical living, and there is little motivation for anyone except the interested researcher to probe the details sufficiently to eliminate the obvious explanations in normal terms.

A much less common form of jott is the 'oddjott,' a class of incident so infrequent that at present it can cautiously be best defined as a jott that is not a relocation but is a material anomaly amounting to a spatial discontinuity.

The six distinguishable classes of jottle can be shortly defined as follows:

Walkabout An article ceases to be present at a known location and is later found at a different location.

Comeback An article known to have been at a certain location ceases to be present there and is later found back at or very near to that same location

Turn-up An article known to the finder but from an uncertain location is found in a location where it is known not to have been before it was found.

Flyaway An article known to have been in a certain location ceases to be present and (to date) remains unfound.

Windfall An article of unknown provenance is found to be inexplicably present.

Trade-in An article ceases to be present at or near a known location and soon afterwards a similar article is found in that location.

It will be seen that walkabout is basic to all classes of jottle. Comeback is a walkabout where the article returns to exactly or approximately the original place. Turn-up is similar to a walkabout except that its take-off location is not known with precision. Flyaway might be the first stage of a walkabout or comeback, and windfall might be the second stage, possibly complementing someone else's flyaway. Trade-in combines flyaway with a bizarrely purposeful windfall.

While the jott nomenclature may reflect the triviality of many (though not all) incidents in the jottle spectrum, the occurrence of discontinuities in an otherwise strictly sequential stream of events has a radical bearing on the influence of mind on matter, a relationship that lies at the very heart of psychical research. It is therefore important to place on record samples of the range of incidents reported.

Some of the most compelling jottles are simple to relate, as they take place within a short time frame and in a restricted area; others are complicated and require the furnishing of a fair amount of detail to carry conviction. In the following examples, individuals are identified by their initials. Cases marked with an asterisk indicate a very full report, in some cases with documentation, and these can be consulted in the file kept in SPR library. The reference numbers refer to this file.

Walkabout, Comeback, Turn-Up

The first case to be presented is particularly convoluted, but it is also extremely well documented. It was reported by Prof BSM, of Bristol University, and this is a very short summary of quite a story set out in a long letter dated 3rd December 1988.

Pigeon Post?

One summer afternoon BSM's wife was sleeping in the very secluded garden of a well detached house in the Somerset countryside. She awoke to find an envelope on her lap addressed to a Miss X at a west London address. Miss X was unknown to the couple. The letter was from a London University College librarian requesting the return of a book (at the time, BSM had no connection with the university). The morning post had already been delivered to the front porch and there was no afternoon post. The letter was returned to the librarian, and later it disappeared, as did the carbon copy from the librarian's file. WK1 (4)*

It will be seen that from Mrs M's perspective this was a very mysterious windfall. From librarian's perspective it became a flyaway, when letter, envelope and carbon copy all departed from his file. As between the Mrs M and the librarian it figures (so far) in a class of its own, where a windfall article becomes a flyaway (perhaps a turnover?). Altogether a very comprehensive jottle, and (unlike some) one where it is difficult to find any motivation, conscious or unconscious.

Remote Control

An American visitor gave a circumstantial account of a walkabout that made a strong impression on her. She went to the trouble of obtaining her passenger's signature to her detailed narrative.

C reached for the CD player remote control, but found that it was not in place, though it had been in use before on that journey. Her passenger confirmed that she had not touched it. They stopped and searched the car, to no avail. After dropping her passenger at home, C drove on another 70 miles, and on arriving home her husband searched the car, unsuccessfully. For two months she operated the CD player manually. But one morning, taking the car out of its locked garage (her husband having his own car in another garage), she found the missing remote control sitting conspicuously in the drinks container between the seats. WK6 (60)*

Saved from the Storm

Unlike the two month absence of the remote control some jottles show clear indications of working for the advantage of the jottler, though on the surface the incident manifests as a nuisance.

A veterinary surgeon had agreed to tramp across fields to inspect a young bull that her friend was minded to buy. On that day, rain was falling and a gale was blowing. When AMSE went to fetch her keys from the table where she had left them they were not there. She had to telephone and cancel the arrangement. The next time she entered the room she saw the keys displayed on the table where she had expected them to be. WK8 (8)*

The deferred rendezvous was welcome to both women. In the following case the article remained missing for much longer, and it happened to a particularly sceptical SPR member, who always preferred any explanation to a paranormal one.

Car Parkin

John Stiles was given a parkin cake to eat on his drive home. Being a slow and cautious driver he risked putting it on the dashboard, but when he stopped, the parkin was not to be found. Nor could it be found next day in daylight. Some months later he arranged to sell the car, and gave it a thorough cleaning, during which he noticed a visible bulge under the carpet in the passenger footwell. Taking up the carpet he found a wizened parkin. CB2 (20)

How the parkin could have got under the carpet and escaped notice before that day remains a puzzle. But it has in common with the following case an element of restoration before a change in circumstances.

Twin Pens

WV, a solicitor, had two Pelikano pens, which he kept in the inside pocket of his jacket. While pausing in the annotation of some papers he put the current one down on the desk, but it was missing when he went to pick it up. A search yielded nothing, so he used his second pen. His secretary could not find the missing pen, nor did the cleaner. Every morning the desk was completely cleared for the post to be sorted. A time came when he was to

move to another room the following day. That evening, while working on papers for use next day, he needed his pen, and saw that it was already on the desk. It was the lost pen, and the other one was still in his pocket. CB3 (28)*

Like the parkin, it came back just in time to make good the loss in that particular setting.

It is sometimes argued against the reality of jott that people put things in strange places while in a state of abstraction, as indeed they do; but abstraction can hardly be stretched to cover either the preceding or the following case, reported by a prominent member of the Scottish SPR.

The Orange Washing-up Bowl

While her husband took the dog for his evening walk, DP washed the dishes, took the bowl out of the sink, put the dishes away, and made to return the bowl to the sink... but the bowl was not there. When her husband returned they both searched the small kitchen, without result. After a day or two the bowl was replaced with a new (red) bowl. A week later DP wanted the pressure cooker, which was kept in a lower cupboard. The cupboard door was seldom used and was blocked by a table. She moved the table, opened the cupboard, but found the pressure cooker jammed in place. Her husband came to help, and when he prised it out they found, wedged in at the back, the orange bowl, still with a residue of stagnant water. WK 12 (47)*

It is difficult to imagine that at some point between washing dishes and putting them away DP abstractedly moved the table, opened the cupboard door, took out the pressure cooker, thrust the still wet orange bowl in at the back of the shelf so that the bowl was wedged between other items, replaced the pressure cooker in the now limited space so that it too was difficult to move, closed the cupboard door and replaced the table in front of it, all before turning round and finding to her surprise that the bowl was not on the drainer. That goes beyond abstraction and into undiagnosed and otherwise non-presenting dissociative identity disorder.

A similar case where someone of supposedly robust mental state would have had to go to elaborate lengths of misplacement was reported by the seasoned researcher, Hereward Carrington, in an article published in the *Journal of the American SPR* (Carrington, 1930).

Keys in Trunk

A nurse, described as a most methodical person, always placed her keys on the dining table as soon as she entered her flat. One day she did this as usual and, soon afterwards looked for them, as she was going out on another case. They were not there. Having searched to no avail, she had to have new keys cut. Several days later she needed to get a cork for a medicine bottle; the corks were kept in a tin box in the bottom drawer of a trunk kept in the hall, to which she had recourse only a few times a year. There in the box was her bunch of keys. She declared that she did not open that drawer on the day when the keys went missing or until she looked for the cork.

The location in the next case was not enclosed, but again was not the sort of place where someone would put down their reading glasses in a state of abstraction. It is related concisely by MM, a long-term member of the SPR.

Glasses on Cupboard

‘We spent a year in Italy, renting an apartment in a large old house... A's [Mrs M] reading glasses went missing and she bought a pair from local optician. When we were cleaning the apartment before leaving, A insisted that I should borrow a step ladder to dust on top of an exceptionally tall ancient wardrobe, and there I found her missing glasses.’ TP8 - (53)*

It might be said that A's demand for cleanliness went beyond the call of duty, and one wonders whether this might have been because she knew psychically that the glasses were there. Or did she know subconsciously, having in an altered state of consciousness put them or even thrown them there? Are seemingly normal people subject to secondary personalities bent on making trouble?

I am as certain as it is possible to be that this does not apply to one of the SPR's leading researchers, who would certainly have diagnosed himself. He reported the following comeback.

On Top Instead of Underneath

DR, seated at his computer, alone in the house at the time, reached for the red-covered telephone index book that lived permanently beside the computer. It was not there. He fetched an A4 sized booklet containing (among other things) council members' contact details, and used that to find a number. After the telephone call was made he became aware that the index book was now back in place, but on top of the booklet. CB9 (62)

If a cosmic controller is trying to convince us that jottles are really human error, malobservation and false memory, it does occasionally make crucial mistakes. The book ought to have come back *underneath* the recently-consulted A4 booklet.

Finally comes a case where it is described in twentieth century terms as a ‘telekinetic recovery’.

Homing Corset

Van Loon was together with his Netherlands-based parents on holiday in the Natal National Park in 1968. His mother had with her two corsets, one black and one white, which she wore on alternate days, the used garment being laundered on the off day. One night the black corset, which had as usual been draped over a chair in the bedroom for use next day was gone by morning, and remained gone despite a thorough search.

When they all returned to the family house in Durban a week or two later, Loon's mother immediately found the black corset rolled up and lying on the upper shelf of the bedroom wardrobe. The servants knew nothing about it, and it had not been sent on by the hotel. Moreover, crucially, the corset had an array of hooks that had to be tied together in a complex pattern known only to its owner. This was puzzling: the hooks would normally be linked

only when the garment was being worn, not just because it was quite difficult to do them up otherwise, but also because the hooks would have to be undone to put the garment on. Nevertheless, the hooks were fully fastened, as if the garment had been put on by a dresser who subsequently dematerialised!

So here we have an oddjott on top of a walkabout, both with a farcical element that is so characteristic of psi incidents. Space being limited, let it also stand for oddjott, and we can move on the next group.

Flyaway, Windfall, Trade-In

Among unselected reports, flyaway is the most frequently reported but also the most frequently ignored. Teaspoons, pens, keys, brooches, ear-rings, and other small objects vanish all over the globe, together with spectacles, money and clothes. One has lingering visions of an ear-ring or an odd sock clinging to curtains; food absent-mindedly consumed; money filched for the usual reasons; and of garments left elsewhere, inadvertently, borrowed, stolen or given away – one day, long forgotten (whether by the owner or a third party) – to a charity sale. But some flyaways carry conviction, appearing to be distinctly non-normal.

A fair number start by falling to the floor. One such was described by Raymond Bayless in a letter dated June 3, 1988, published in the Paranormal Review.

Paintbrush

RB was giving a painting lesson to a student in a bare studio covered from wall to wall in linoleum. While demonstrating a technique he dropped the brush (280mm long and 25mm at its widest point), and heard it clatter on the floor. He and the student searched for it, examining room edges and trouser turn-ups, but the brush was never seen again. FY 2 (2)*

Many of us have experienced dropping something and then failing to find it, as though it had been wiped out of existence, the sudden transition having dislodged it from its coordinates. Perhaps we need to reverse 'Out of sight out of mind' and add 'Out of mind out of sight' to our store of common wisdom.

This however is not what happened to the late Prof David Fontana, psychologist, multi-disciplinary author and past president of the SPR.

Red Leather Folder

Fontana kept a distinctive red leather folder, embossed with the name of Coutts's bank in gold lettering, containing bank statements from long past years. He needed to find the date of a purchase. He found the statement in question, noted the date, and then laid the folder (together with the statements) on the table in his study and went to work. When he returned the folder was no longer there. His wife and university age children said they had not been in the study. Fontana made a thorough search of the room, but the folder was never found. FY6 (40)*

It would be a pity to leave the subject of flyaway without referring to Hereward Carrington's flagship flyaway, Mrs S's hat (Carrington 1930). Carrington reported this case (D) in great detail, stating that the six people present were personally known to him and were respectable, upright citizens. No one else came into the room.

Lady's Hat

In the course of an informal tea party Dr T made some jocular remark about Mrs S's hair, with the result that Mrs S removed her hat and placed it on the floor beside her easy chair. An hour later when she put her hand down to retrieve her hat it was no longer there. The room was searched, but Mrs S's hat was never found there or anywhere else.

That is a hard act to follow, and we move on to its reverse, windfall. The first of these is related at great length by the late Maurice Grosse, and it is a challenge to comprehension. But the complexities repay close attention, because they do seem beyond explanation in causal terms.

Two Extra Keys

On January 3 1985, Maurice Grosse's wife lost her house keys. Maurice changed the lock, and put the keys to the old lock away in a box, accounting for all old keys. He attached new keys to his key ring and that of his wife. Next day an additional key (gleaming and new) was found on both rings; these mystery keys were found to fit the old discarded lock, though all the 'real' old keys were still there in the box. The mystery new keys to the old lock bore the name of the locksmith who had provided the new lock and keys, but the matrix of the keys to the old lock emanated from another branch. WF3 (22)*

A familiar element (apart from the jottle-proneness of keys, and of MG) is that of identical articles, which do seem to generate fertile ground for outbreaks of jott.

When it comes to serving a need rather than generating confusion, a veritable godsend was reported by the late John Stiles. He considered it to be an amazing, but perfectly normal, coincidence.

Spark Plug

Before he had the car that swallowed his parkin, John had a moped that relied on a single spark plug. ('Moped' here refers to a motorized bicycle popular in the UK in the mid-twentieth century, now more-or-less obsolete.) He was en route to his garage to have the vehicle serviced, and still had a few miles to cover, when the moped spluttered to a stop, its plug suffused with oil. John took it out and substituted a clean plug, which oiled up after a few minutes, as did his second spare. He wheeled the vehicle into a side road to consider his next move, and there he saw something bright lying in the gutter: it was a new, clean spark plug, of precisely the make and size required. He installed it: it did not oil up, and he rode on to the garage. WF7 (25)

So, did the owner of a similar moped leave a new, clean plug lying in the gutter? And was it just by chance that the moped broke down close to the

side road, and that he wheeled it to the very spot? He could have continued on his way, wheeling the moped the remaining mile, this otherwise being his only realistic option.

Trade-in strains against the boggle-threshold even of the open-minded, but though rare these incidents are reported. In most cases the transaction leaves the jottler worse off, and that was certainly the experience of Dr Alan Mayne.

Old for New: Two Apples

The incident occurred one day when Mayne was a student at Oxford, living in a bedsit. He picked up a pale green apple intending to eat it, but it slipped out of his hand onto the floor. He searched for it, but without success. Some time later he was having dinner with a physicist friend of his mother's, in her kitchen, when, towards the end of the meal, a small wizened green apple suddenly fell from the air onto his plate. TN1 (1)*

Was a cosmic joker pretending that this was the reappearance of the apple snatched from the bedsitter, now suitably aged and served on a plate? Or was it just a coincidental windfall (well-named in this case), rather than a genuine trade-in.

Lucian Landau, a long-term SPR member, reported some bizarre jottles, some (but not all) leading to a useful outcome. Landau's wife Eileen was a medium, and the couple seemed to take causally challenging events as part of their normal life experience. He had originally been an engineer and was a sharp observer.

Hunting Horn Brooch

Eileen had a favourite brooch, and she would get Lucian to pin it on to the dress or coat she was wearing, so he was very familiar with it. The brooch featured two silver horse-shoes fixed to a silver bar with a horn fitted between them that could be rotated and seen through from one end to the other. It also had a rotary locking device, which was loose, and one day the brooch was found to be missing when they came home. TN4 (45)*

After about ten weeks the brooch reappeared on a disfavoured dress that had been cast out of the wardrobe and was lying draped over a couch in Eileen's bedroom. However, Lucian observed – although he did not tell Eileen – that it was in fact not the same brooch, even though it closely resembled with, featuring two horse-shoes and a horn placed through them. The pin was longer than in the original; there was no silver bar; the horn could not be seen through or rotated; and the clasp was secured only by the pin and a loop – it had never had a locking device.

Lucian was certain that the trade-in brooch had not been acquired normally and its presence on the disfavoured dress forgotten. And though the brooch was inferior to the original it served the purpose of making Eileen happy.

The final case can be told in the economical words of VSV, who has related several jottles in her characteristically laid-back style.

Wrong Clock

‘Travelling to Latvia I took with me my small, square, white alarm clock. After the return journey, unpacking, could not find it. Instead there was a similar, but not the same, alarm clock, not functioning, broken.

‘Some days later, in the middle of the front hall, a clear floor space with nothing on it – there was the original alarm clock. I could not have put it there. Once it was there one could not miss seeing it.’ TN6 (59)

This double incident has been classified under trade-in, as that is its most unusual aspect, but strictly speaking it is a *failed* trade-in followed by a walkabout, the ‘walk’ starting in Latvia and ending in London!

That is a good point from which to make some closing observations. It is obvious in the clock incident that a clock did not float from Latvia to London, and that jottling articles do not in fact pass through walls and cupboard doors. Rather, we can deduce that articles cease to be constituted at the location where they vanish and are reconstituted at the location where they are found.

We might deduce further that the loser/finder is the one whose subconscious mind fails to observe/actualise the lost article and later makes good the loss by actualising/observing it at the place where he finds it. There obviously is a lot more to be said on the actualisation of potentialities, and disruptions to sequential causality, but here the presentation of facts is the foremost consideration, and theories are for elsewhere.

Oddjott

Finally we come to the rarely observed phenomenon of Oddjott, which differs from jottles in that relocation is not the main feature; it is hard to define with precision and formality, but without precision oddjott amounts to an environmental anomaly and without formality it can be described as matter misbehaving.

I have to start with my own experience, as it was the first time it occurred to me that such anomalies could occur in the ordinary course of life outside the seance room. I now suspect that they may occur more frequently than reported cases would suggest, because things that actually happen are usually accepted as the ordinary course of life.

Inside-Out Duvet Cover

A duvet cover was washed and dried in the tumble drier. It was made of flimsy polyamide secured across its width by a zip. The zip was of fragile construction with a tiny zip closer that could not operate in either direction unless the material on either side was held closely together. The article emerged from the drier inside out and fully zipped up to the hilt *with the zip closer tag inside*, so that the only sign of a zip was a line visible across the width. At one end of the thin line a pin-sized hole was just visible.

Unfortunately, when I had grasped the meaning of the line and the hole, i.e. this was a completely closed system zipped up and secured from inside, I regarded this as a nuisance rather than as an anomaly, and painstakingly

eased the zip backwards by inserting the point of a pair of nail scissors and pushing the zip back millimetre by millimetre. Fortunately I had to engage a helper (and therefore a witness) to hold the material in place. When I had completed the task I realised that I had destroyed physical evidence of an oddjott.

Too late I saw that there were only two possibilities, neither actually possible. One is that the article went in wash fully zipped up, and turned itself inside out, which is categorically impossible; moreover, it would be improbable – to the point of being unthinkable – that I would have taken the trouble (and it was a lot of trouble) to zip something up that would only have to be unzipped for the duvet to be re-inserted.

The alternative is that it went in the wash totally unzipped, as it almost certainly did, and in the course of washing and drying zipped itself up to the hilt (that it should have ended inside out is of no consequence). While it is a common experience to find that substantial, metal zips on substantial fabrics tend to unzip in washers and driers, I assert that it has never been known for a zip to zip itself up – and when it is small, fiddly and needs material held together on both sides, such a thing could not happen.

All this dawned on me too late to save the precious article, and soon afterwards the excitement was too much for the zip, which broke down, immoveable in either direction. OJ1 (19)

Let us pass without further lament to the other oddjott to be related here, which did not produce a significant end product, but consisted of an anomalous operation, the passage of matter through matter. The incident was related to me by PHP, a retired professor of chemistry who at the time was living with his wife in a luxurious complex of retirement apartments.

Alarm Call Necklace

The professor complied with the request of the management to wear round his neck an alarm caller device. The device had a stout cord passed through side brackets in a closed circuit. Nevertheless, it detached itself from the cord and fell at his feet, the cord remaining intact. OJ3 (63)

Most jottles necessarily imply the passing of matter through matter, whether the article turns up in a cupboard, another room or another house. But what is observed is that the article that was in one location is now in a different location, not the mode of its passage from one state to another. With oddjott, the focus is on an anomaly of process rather than an anomaly of location. Oddjott does not get widely reported, which may mean that it occurs less frequently than jottles, or that it is more likely to pass unnoticed.

Conclusion

These sample reports conclude this brief overview of jott, sufficient, I hope, to establish at least a *prima facie* case for maintaining that things can cease to manifest in locations where they were constituted immediately before that cessation, and that they can manifest in locations where, immediately before manifestation, they were not constituted. We can move on to considering the implications of this finding and how it relates to everyday events that

comply with the expectations of sequential causality. Put more shortly, the next step is to consider how jott fits in with normal life.