

EXTRA

From millionaire to kitchen hand:
When James Dobbes came home yesterday, home was no longer there. Exclusive interview PAGE 6



Psychological Comment:
Parallels with East Germany PAGE 7

CHICAGO NEWS

City & Suburbs & Elsewhere for free

TUESDAY, JUNE 5, 2007

CHICAGOLAND

Members of upper class affected by inexplicable phenomenon of lost status

CRISIS!

Lake Point Tower plus two luxury villas suddenly replaced by affordable homes – Occupants seem different

By Burkhard Frederick
Chicago News Service

CHICAGO – Suddenly and as yet unaccountably, Lake Point Tower and two luxury villas, one on LaSalle Street and the other on Prairie Avenue, have disappeared unobserved.



DP photo by Helmut Long

BEFORE: Lake Point Tower, February 2007: Sought-after luxury suites for wealthy people

Since around noon yesterday, two prefabs and one concrete slab structure have been standing on their sites. The occupants of the former condo also appear changed. Psychologists are speaking of a Status-L-Phenomenon. It cannot be ruled out that the cause was a terrorist attack. US President George W. Bush has proclaimed a state of emergency.

It was one of those days Chicago will not forget in a hurry. The happening occurred at around 1:40 p.m., when the city lost one of its landmarks almost unnoticed. Lake Point Tower, at 645 feet high, with 70 floors and 900 condos, is one of the world's largest apartment blocks. This epitome of wealth and luxury suddenly disappeared. Occupant Mark Hughes, 39, an estate agent, still cannot take in what happened. "Hey, this is surreal, man. I was sitting by the lake doing my yoga exercises. Then I looked

PLEASE SEE CRISIS, PAGE 2



Bush proclaims state of emergency for Chicago

Psychologists on hand for counseling

By Tom Ripley
Chicago News Service

Following yesterday's unexplained change of luxury apartments and their occupants, Chicago was placed in a state of emergency shortly before midnight. Quoting unspecified sources, the US Administration asserts that the situation is under control and that citizens are not in serious danger. Nevertheless, Chicago's citizens are fleeing the city in droves. All exit routes were blocked until the following morning, and all flights out of the city are fully booked until the end of the week.

Several hundred psychologists in yellow uniform have been deployed within the city boundaries, to reassure the population and prevent the outbreak of panic.

Diehard resistance!

By Peter G. Retour
Chicago

America is in uproar. The alarming house swap in Chicago has shaken the nation. The cause of the Lost Status Phenomenon has not yet been identified, but it is already obvious that forewarned is forearmed. President George W. Bush has said that freedom must be defended, no matter where the enemy lies. In our country, private property is the bedrock and guarantor of prosperity and progress. Those who hack at our roots can expect diehard resistance. It's only right and proper.

INSIDE

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Status-L-Phenomenon reaches epidemic proportions PAGE 2-3

Insurers decline liability

Also all insurance policies are lost PAGE 4

Trail leads to Germany

Risk management organization NOVA PORTA describes phenomenon in advance

Significant details match PAGE 5

AFTER: Lake Point Tower post-change: Social housing replaces luxury suites. Rats in the basement, washing hung on balconies. A very un-American process.



AN ORIGINAL ARTWORK
BY JANA GUNSTHEIMER

CRISIS: Government is ignorant

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

up and suddenly noticed this monstrosity. My beautiful tower had quite simply gone. All this has got to be a bad joke, hasn't it?"

The building replacing the elegant tower really is shockingly ugly – an unimaginative frame colored a grubby white. The entrances are daubed with graffiti and washing hangs from the windows. It feels like a move to the slums, though this is a prime location on the shore of Lake Michigan. The same phenomenon now exists on La-Salle Street and Prairie Avenue, where ordinary terraced houses have replaced two luxury villas.

Bank manager in underwear

So the only people affected by the weird metamorphosis are members of Chicago's upper class. Plainly, not just the buildings have been affected. John Lincoln Smith, 53, bank manager and patron of the arts, sits in the kitchen of his terraced house, unshaven and clad in vest and track-suit bottom. The television is playing and the playmate poster of the month embellishes the wall. Abandoned on the table are an empty pizza box and an empty liquor bottle. The former sophisticated gentleman seems unaware of the change: "Hey, old-timer, whadd'ya want? Ya gotta problem? Wanna punch on the jaw?" It is as if Smith, and all the other condo dwellers who were at home at the time of the metamorphosis, have undergone some kind of brainwashing.

New left-wing terror?

The cause of this sinister change remains unidentified. So far there is no evidence of a terrorist attack. But White House security adviser Richard McCarthy still considers this a possible line of inquiry. "It can be no accident that this metamorphosis has specifically affected only wealthy and privileged people. Only social envy can lie behind this, and a wish to make everybody equal. Maybe we're looking at a completely new form of left-wing terror."

Meanwhile, Chicago's upper class is showing initial signs of panic. Some privileged people have hired security firms to protect their homes, while others are leaving the city. President George W. Bush has proclaimed a state of emergency and announced that he will address the nation this evening.

Emergency

The phenomenon spread from downtown Chicago like



3
Luxury 12-room villa on
Prairie Avenue turns into
rundown four-room house
3 occupants and
3 employees affected

E X T R A

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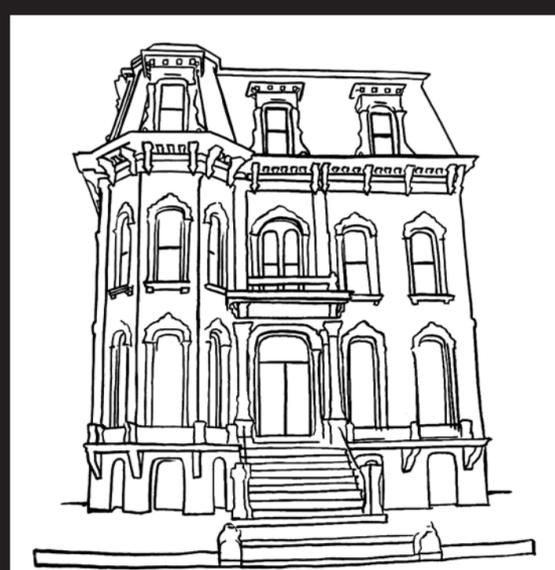
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Before



After

3

1:50 p.m.: third change

12-room villa on Prairie Avenue owned by a long-established Chicago family turns into a dilapidated suburban house. Parents absent at the time of the act; daughter at home. Former servants are now sub-tenants who have lost all respect for the owners

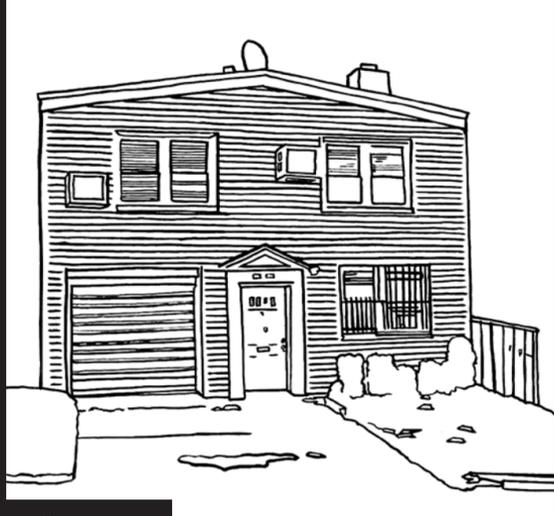
Spots:

a plague





Before



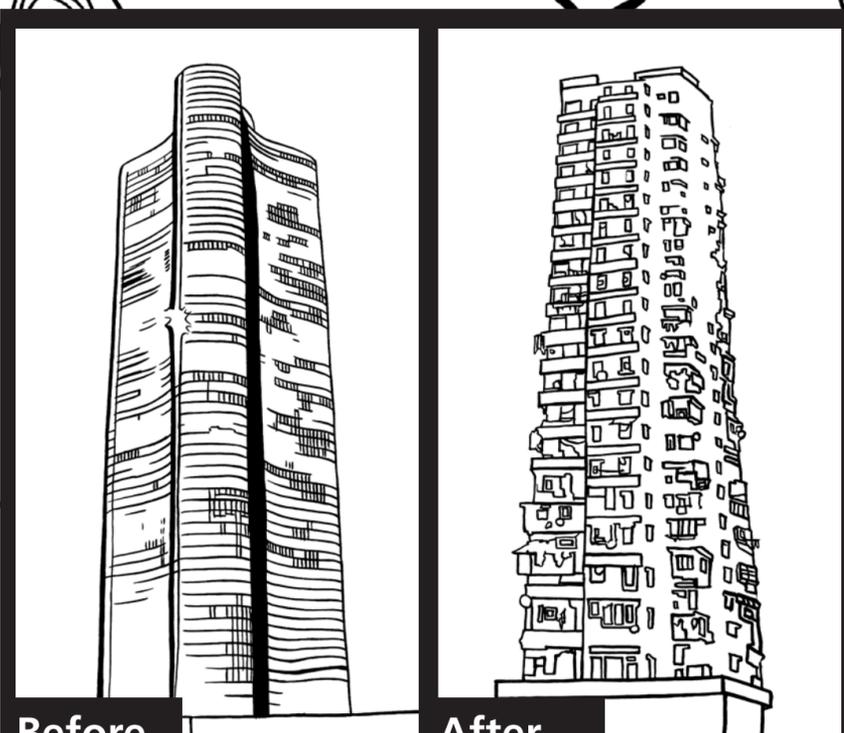
After

2 1:45 p.m.: second change

Seven-room villa on LaSalle Street owned by a respectable Chicago family turns into a house in terrible condition. The lady of the house was at home at 1:45 p.m. Her appearance and behavior have since changed noticeably. Her husband, absent at the time, was unaffected by the change.

2
Seven-room villa on LaSalle Street turns into shabby 3 1/2-room house
2 occupants and 3 employees affected

1
Drastic change to Lake Point Tower
1224 residents affected



1 1:40 p.m.: first change
 Lake Point Tower turns into a seedy tower block of social housing and disastrous facilities. 345 residents were at home at 1:40 p.m. and seemed unaware of the radical change. Their behavior suggests brainwashing. Former residents of luxury single apartments are herded into tiny, rundown rooms with their neighbors. Six to eight occupants share one bathroom and one kitchen.

A historic landmark passed away... LAKE POINT TOWER - facts:

- 645 ft, 70 floors
- Tallest all-residential building in the world from 1968 until 1993, when Tregunter 3 was completed in Hong Kong.
- The design was influenced by a visionary skyscraper for Berlin drawn in 1922 by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe.
- The building's curves were calculated so residents could not see into each other's windows.
- A few apartments in the building were formerly used as temporary housing for
- actors working in Chicago, including Anthony Quinn, Tom Cruise, Dolly Parton, and Helga Conrads.
- On top of the building there was a circular penthouse occupied by a restaurant.
- To perfect the uninterrupted simplicity of the tower's facade, heating, air conditioning, and ventilation systems were hidden in the fixed window sashes.
- Every window of every residential unit in the building had a view of Lake Michigan.

LAKE POINT TOWER, CHICAGO, 1:40 P.M.: REALIZING THE UNBELIEVABLE



Lake Point Tower maintained a security system that features 24-hour doormen and security guards, an electronic key-entry system, closed-circuit cameras and valet parking. Despite everything, Walter Scott was overwhelmed by events. One of the best security guards before, he was summarily dismissed after the events.

Insurers decline liability

After yesterday afternoon's mysterious happenings in Chicago, major insurers have received multiple claims. However, it remains unclear who is liable for what. According to a statement yesterday evening by Sun Life Finance Company spokesperson, this is a case of force majeure, and there is no insurance coverage for the losses incurred.

There are other reasons why compensation may well prove hard to obtain: in the cases which have so far emerged, the insurance policies no longer exist. When the houses disappeared, the policies vanished into thin air.

A telephone hotline has been set up to answer questions from members of the public.

The number is 180-100-1000; the line is open 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday to Friday.

A series of gaffes

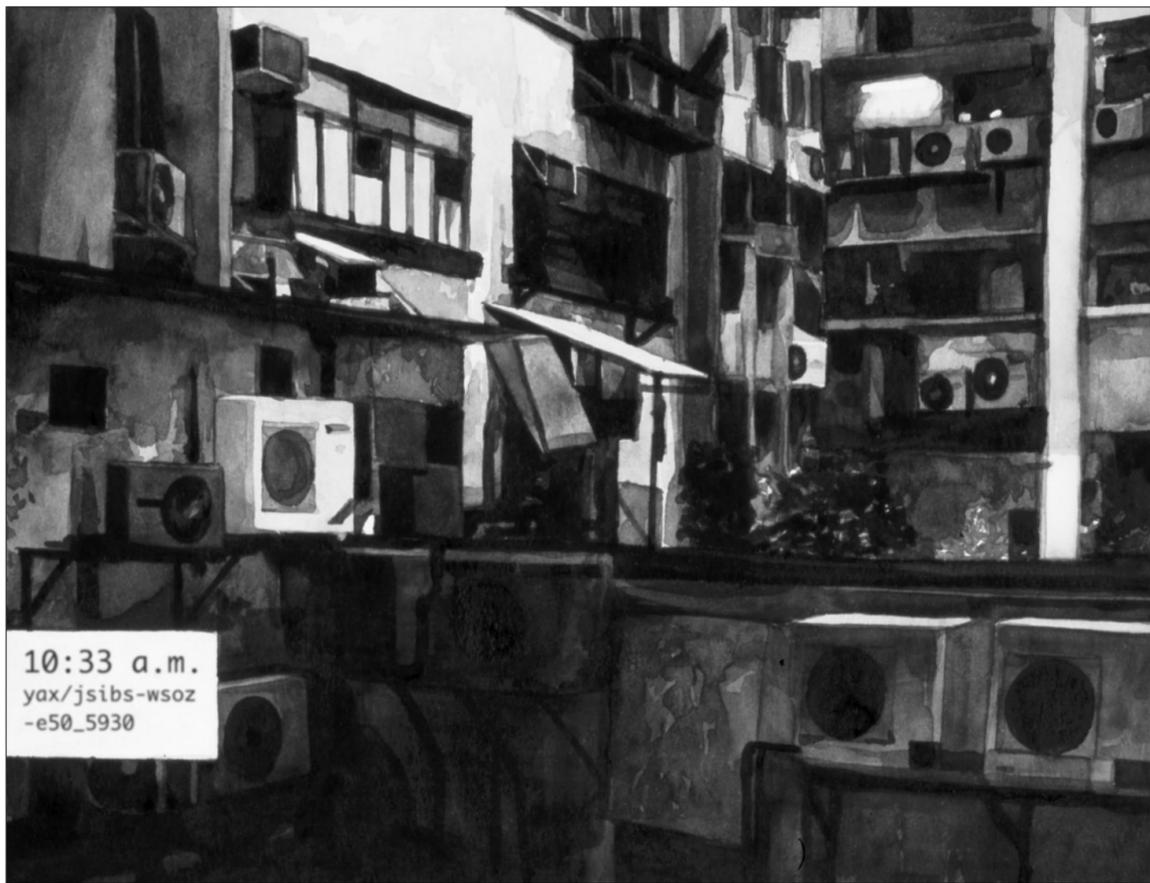
Senator Clark suspended from office after imposing a ban on leaving Chicago yesterday evening

Instead of proclaiming the state of emergency ordered by President Bush, Senator Clark yesterday evening imposed an exit ban on the citizens of Chicago. The measure came close to provoking revolt among the populace, already in a high state of agitation. Many Chicagoans, alarmed by the unfolding events, did not want to go into their homes at all. In South Lake District, police were driving panicking citizens back into their homes.

Senator Clark excused his actions as an error of judgment, and has been suspended from office indefinitely. The exit ban was lifted at around 11:40 p.m..

The score to date: Immeasurable damage after yesterday's events

Claims filed so far: 1065
Material damage: \$ 130,750,000
Personal injury: total: 1235
Persons affected by Status-L-Phenomenon: 493



Creepy discovery: security cameras in Lake Point Tower did not record the change. Footage shows the building already changed yesterday morning. Doctored?

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Act of retribution?

Americans answer survey on yesterday's unexplained changes

	in %		
	Yes	No	Maybe
Do you believe yesterday's happenings will continue?	17	12	71
Do you fear for your material possessions?	33	10	57
Should the US Administration intensify its anti-terror measures?	4	7	89
Do you feel safe in your home?	6	13	81
Do you see rich families' dramatic loss of property as an act of retribution?	17	5	78

Psychological comment: Parallels with East Germany

We interview the famous social psychologist Professor Richard Schreiber

Interview by Bridget Schultz
Chicago News staff reporter

People at home during the mysterious metamorphoses of several luxury apartments in Chicago (reported in this newspaper) seem to have undergone some kind of brainwashing. They have fully settled into their new surroundings without protest or psychological defense mechanisms. Their speech patterns and all other habits are intact. Those involved have not actually noticed the major changes around them. Our reporter Bridget Schultz asked the well-known social psychologist, Professor Richard Schreiber, about what has meanwhile been classed as a Status-L-Phenomenon (social status loss).



Prof. Schreiber

their new roles so level-headed. While all their surroundings have changed, the people involved have remained the same. Developmental psychology tells us that it is more important for a child's healthy mental growth to have one person as a fixed point of reference than unchanging surroundings. In fact, essentially, this is no different during adulthood.

But how is it possible for educated, highly cultivated people to suffer such a sudden comedown?

Well, we have never before observed loss of social status at such speed. However, studies

exist from the former German Democratic Republic which describe a similar phenomenon among that little country's former ruling class after unification with West Germany, the German Federal Republic.

Can you describe this East German phenomenon in more detail?

What immediately strikes me is that there are extremely significant parallels here, in terms of changed living conditions. Some members of the former East German elite – managers of state corporations, party officials, engineers and teachers – lived in what, at the time, were very comfortable new apartments in prefabricated concrete developments known as 'Plattenbau'. Since 1990, these former model developments have become social flashpoints. But many of the then privileged classes continue to live there and have increasingly adapted to their environment, apparently without effort. For example, tabloid newspapers such as 'Bild' and 'SuperIllu' have joined the afternoon chat shows on the private TV channels as their main source of information and subject of discussion. The former elite argue in the jargon of armchair politicians, and exist mainly on a deep-frozen and fast food diet.

That's awful! Is this proletarian movement likely to take hold

in large parts of the country?

As far as I can tell from these studies, the answer is 'yes'.

How far is the process in East Germany comparable with the Chicago Status-L-Phenomenon?

We are now trying to compare American conditions with those of the former East Germany. The indicators we are detecting are uncannily similar: unemployment, no sense of democracy and a pessimistic view of society. Therefore, in structural terms, a few predictions can already be made.

How might the Status-L-Phenomenon be avoided?

Our institute has developed a prevention program which basically consists of the following steps: place the media under state control; introduce uniform educational standards; and ensure government control and monitoring of the food industry.

Our experience of these measures elsewhere has been good. But I would venture to question whether they are capable of preventing a status loss of such earth-shaking proportions.

Professor Richard Schreiber is a graduate psychologist working at Chicago University Institute of Political Psychology and Socialization.

THE HOUSE WHICH DESCENDANTS WOULD HAVE INHERITED



Chicago News photo by Frieda Gregory

Family-owned for almost 140 years, this historic landmark on Prairie Avenue disappeared yesterday afternoon. The disappearance of this historically important house not only represents a sad loss to Chicago, but to the family's descendants, who face ruin.

Jesus is punishing us for our sins

By Stephen Laudien
Amalgamated Press

CHICAGO – As the events of yesterday afternoon unfolded, curious onlookers flocked to the dismantled buildings. Photographers are selling 'before/after' views and TV channels from all over America have dispatched reporters. Police tried in vain to seal off a wide area. However, all occupants of the affected houses are now being interviewed. It remains unclear when they will be able to give information publicly.

"Jesus is punishing us for our sins", claimed nurse Miriam Baker, whose cousin Derek lives in one of the houses. Pensioner John Williams, who owns a house in the immedi-

ate vicinity of the former Lake Point Tower, said he guessed Communists were behind the house-swap. "A first step towards forced equality", commented the active 72-year-old. Police statements are unusually sparse. A police spokesman disclosed that the special "Lost Status" commission had suspended their work, and initial findings were expected shortly. A neighbor, who asked not to be identified, spoke of extraterrestrials who wanted to play a game like Monopoly on Earth. The man added that the occurrence, classed as a Lost-Status-Phenomenon, was only at the beginning. Still, there is no serious evidence that extraterrestrials could have been at work.

Trail leads to Germany

NOVA PORTA tests Drugs for partial memory loss

Important details match

By Jana Gunstheimer
Extra Tribune

As with the 9/11 attacks, an important trail in this case also leads to Germany. In April this year NOVA PORTA, a German risk management organization published a worrying article in its house magazine "Maßnahme" (which approximates to 'measures for managing risks' in English). The article describes a phenomenon which is viewed as a desirable occurrence. Referring to it as the "phenomenon of modified disposition", the article claims that the phenomenon makes it easier to cope with socially problematic events such as unemployment or loss of material possessions due to stock market crashes or inflation.

NOVA PORTA appears to be engineering a controlled occurrence of the described phenomenon. According to informed sources, the organization is conducting experiments reminiscent of the destruction of the intellectual elite in the German concentration camps. In remote forest areas of deserted East Germany, the organization is setting up reserves for jobless people. 30 inmates

are being held in captivity here, under total surveillance. They originate from the upper echelons of society, but vegetate in the reserve under the most primitive conditions, lacking all social inclusion.

According to an undercover source, the organization is working on targeted administration of medicines not licensed on the market, to prevent uprisings by the inmates. The drugs bring about a partial memory loss, erasing disposition and learned social deportment. Apparently they allow complete replacement of behaviour patterns attributable to a given social position, and which have become part and parcel of the persona, with new ones.

As of last night, it had not been possible to ascertain how far these experiments have succeeded. However, it is conceivable that such drugs were also administered in Chicago. Given the initial findings, the parallels are too remarkable to be ignored. So is this a case of an internationally active terror network? And what aims is it pursuing?

www.nova-porta.org

Peace to the hovels! Death to the palaces!

By Carla Marks
Rückwärts, Berlin

Is it coincidence that these mysterious metamorphoses have struck in America, rather than anywhere else? Coincidence that this event hit America exactly one month before its national day? Coincidence that the specific victims are prosperous Americans? All this seems highly unlikely.

In contrast to the 9/11 attacks

on New York's twin towers, this time America can discern no hatred from the Muslim world. On this occasion the terror threat appears to come from the Left. The eerie metamorphosis of Chicago's luxury Lake Point Tower apartments into down-at-heel social housing, and the transformation of villas into terraced houses, is reminiscent of one of the most popular Communist proposals ever – Georg Büchner's "Peace

to the Hovels! Death to the Palaces!" of 1834.

The left-wing terrorists, if it is they who claim responsibility, could not have chosen a better country for their first attack. The whole world sees the USA as synonymous with capitalism. The new left-wing terror assails one of the fundamental myths of the United States of America: the American Dream – the human right to the pursuit of happiness enshrined in the

American Declaration of Independence. This dream of rising from scullion to millionaire has hitherto prevented the formation of social classes. So far, the firm belief in personal ability to achieve a better life by hard work and determination has always proved stronger than the idea of solidarity. But if more and more 'palaces' disappear like Lake Point Tower, peace will be assured to the hovels.

Lost? Nothing is lost here

By Professor Filippo Oviga
Mosogno, Switzerland

Once again, an allegedly inexplicable phenomenon is reported. The media stirs up the dust, one or two well-to-do inhabitants appear to change, while three houses allegedly show symptoms which fit no known theory. Ignore it all, suggests the present writer.

Some phenomena are so familiar that we actually do not notice them at all. Sociologists, psychologists and philosophers have often discussed such circumstances. For example Tamas Kiss, in the early 1920s, developed the notion that the

purpose of art is to defamiliarize the situation it depicts. "We look at ourselves, but no longer see ourselves. Our perception of the world has contracted. All that is left is recognition." So artists must seek to shift what they portray into the arena of new perception. As an example, Kiss cites one of Tolstoy's stories which defamiliarizes social habits and institutions by presenting them from the viewpoint of a narrator who happens to be a horse. As Ludwig Wittgenstein (Philosophical Investigations, Oxford, 1953) explained quite a long time ago, "the aspects of things that are most important for us are hid-

den because of their simplicity and familiarity (one is unable to notice something – because it is always before one's eyes)."

So three houses have elicited reactions unknown to behavioral psychology – the occupants have apparently changed. Have they really? Or is this merely an anomorphic problem (see also Felice Varini, Filiale, Berlin 2007). It seems to me that the true source of this alleged phenomenon lies in a fundamentally wrong behaviorist and structuralist approach in response to this manifestation. I am convinced that it is necessary first to take the necessary distance from the presumed phenom-

ena. When a suitable method of apperception has then been found, everything – absolutely everything – can be explained with quite rudimentary justifications. Intuition, and superficial attempts at interpretation by the media, will not achieve this result. I would point out that even the most basic discoveries of conventional physics had a certain shock effect – elliptical paths or gravitational constants are similarly impenetrable to human intuition.

Filippo Oviga is Professor of the Physics of Anamorphic Systems. He lives in Mosogno, Switzerland

Social collapse

When James Dobbes got home yesterday, home was no longer there. He could not recognize his daughter, either. Exclusive interview.

By Liz Tanner
Post staff reporter

Mr Dobbes, you are one of the people affected by the mysterious occurrence in Chicago yesterday, which is already being classed a Status-L-Phenomenon. A former resident of a villa on Prairie Avenue, South District, you are one of those who were not at home at the time of the offence. Can you describe your experience of this disaster to us?

Well, I got back from a business trip at around seven o'clock. I got into a taxi at the airport, gave my address, and paid no attention to my surroundings or to any changes in the city. As we neared the house, we could go no further. Police had sealed the area off and a massive crowd of on-lookers was barring access. It gave me a fright. I wondered whether something had happened to my wife or perhaps whether our house had burned down. I got out of the taxi and tried to make my way along the blocked street. It took me a while to thread my way through the crowd. When I finally set eyes on the house, I felt relieved. It wasn't our house at all. Apparently the taxi driver had dropped me in the wrong street. I tried to regain my bearings. Then I realized that this really was my neighborhood. Everything looked exactly as usual. The only difference was this shabby terraced house standing where our home had been.

I tried to keep cool and work out what had happened, but without success. So I asked a policeman what had happened. He explained that a woman had called the police. He added that her house had disappeared while she had been out, and that something else was now standing in its place.

The woman was your wife, Sue, who was also absent at the time of the occurrence.

Yes, she was completely disoriented, understandably. You think you've gone crazy when something like this happens. Then she was worried about our daughter, who must have been at home at the time. She did not know what had happened to her.

So your wife went into the house...

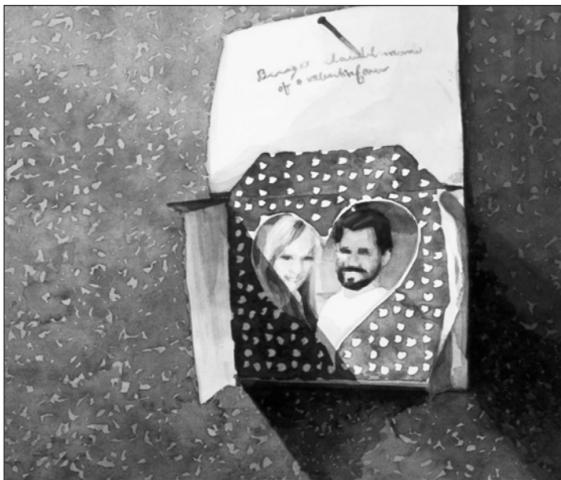
... First she rang at the door, as she could hear a loud voice from within, which sounded like our housekeeper, Mandy. When no one answered the bell, she tried her key in the



Chicago News photos by Richard Richardson (3)

James Dobbes in his new kitchen. The ex-millionaire now lives in sub-standard conditions. His domestic staff are now sub-tenants. He has to do his own washing up.

lock. Strangely, it worked. She walked into the house, along this dark, smelly hallway strewn with objects she had never seen. She ventured into the living room, where she could hear a voice. There she found Mandy. She was relieved and worried at the same time. Relieved, because she had found someone she knew. Worried because Mandy's behavior towards my wife was quite different from usual. Mandy was sprawled in an armchair. The television was on, and all the packing from a Chinese takeaway was lying on the grubby table in front of her. My wife asked what was up, but Mandy looked completely blank at her. She claimed to be a sub-tenant who had already lived there for three years. There's a grain of truth in that: she has been working for us for three years, but no way is she a sub-tenant.



Remnants of happy days: James Dobbes with wife Sue on a sailing trip to the Caribbean. Sue gave him the photograph as a Valentine's day gift.

Mr Dobbes, what has happened to your daughter?

Eleonor must have undergone a similar change. My wife found her at the back of the apartment, in a gloomy room plastered with posters of a heavy metal band. Her personal appearance had also completely altered. She had piercings everywhere and her hair was dyed black. She was pale, and looked really ill. I mean, Eleonor is 15. Our daughter is – or was – a charming girl with exquisite manners. No-one could wish for a better daughter.

How did your daughter react to your wife?

Everything she said was normal: "Hi, Mum! Just look at you?" She seemed to have noticed nothing of the change to the house, or to herself.

Coming back to you: what happened when you put your questions to the policeman?

I explained that I live in this house. They immediately bundled me into a car, where a policeman explained to me

what had happened. He told me about Lake Point Tower and another villa, and tried to reassure me that my family were safe and sound. He asked me to check whether I could draw money using my credit card, as the other people involved were experiencing problems. My card, too, had been stopped.

Did you go into the house after that?

It wasn't possible at the time, because a special commission had been deployed to record conditions in the house and secure the evidence. But, a few hours later, I was allowed to enter the house under police supervision. It was like walking into the life of another family. There was not a vestige of anything familiar to me. From my present life only one photograph remains to me, showing my wife and me on a sailing trip. I had it with me yesterday...

What are you going to do now?

I very much hope the matter will be cleared up and we can all return to our previous lives.



Grim: the Dobbes' bed-sitting room. They now live in just one room full of tired furniture, sharing the bathroom with their former employee.

Status-L-Phenomenon

'Status L', the phenomenon of lost status, is a sociological term coined by Alfred Herrenhaus in 1957. It denotes instantaneous loss of material possessions, accompanied by adaptation of behavior to changed status and living conditions. The phenomenon seems to include automatic adjustment of awareness as the new living situation begins. This adjustment is reflected in a modified disposition of the affected person, i.e. a change of lifestyle, language, clothing and tastes. Habits of thought, feeling and action seem disabled.

As an example of this phenomenon, Herrenhaus cites the case of a prosperous citizen who lost all his possessions overnight and immediately adopted the behaviour patterns of a member of the lower classes. The person's social connections and circle of acquaintances were unchanged after the event, and reacted in confusion to it. Finally, the person was excluded from his previous entourage, but was unable to establish new relations, as those now around him knew that he had belonged to the upper class.

Herrenhaus's description of the Status-L-Phenomenon belongs to a concept of social utopia attributable to the school of Socialist Realism. Herrenhaus was alluding to the break-up of inherited power structures in the post-war Germany of the 1950s.

Public reactions:

Will this carry on forever?

Many citizens are affected

Joan L. (72):
Lost her friend?

My friend Lynn was living in one of the condos in Lake Point Tower. When I heard what had happened, I tried to call her at once. But when I dialed her number, I only heard 'this number has not been recognized.' No one can tell me what has happened to her. And she must have been at home yesterday afternoon when it happened.



Sarah C. N. (48):
Flight!

All this is incredible! I just want to get away. We're trying to leave the city and stay with our daughter in Santa Monica. Of course we fear that yesterday's occurrences were not one-offs. I think we will be safe with our daughter.



John C. (51):
Only the rich?

No one can explain what happened here. But it bugs me somehow that only rich people were affected. Perhaps the next thing will be a metamorphosis in the opposite direction. I get home from work and find my shack turned into a villa, my wife a dreamgirl bride? I'd feel better if it were this way round.



OUT ON THE STREET



DP photo by Josua Lenn

Computer specialist and administrative officer with Chicago City Government, Richard G., was working at home when the terrible event struck. His highly specialized equipment suddenly reverted to standards of the early 1990s. His wife, on returning home that evening, was horrified at his changed demeanour and appearance, and immediately threw him out of the marital home. He took his equipment with him. As he explained to a Chicago News reporter, he only wanted to carry on with the job interrupted that afternoon.

Politics at a loss

Comment by
Lorenzo da Silva

After yesterday afternoon's mysterious fall of Lake Point Tower in Chicago, the American nation is engaged in some soul-searching. People are wondering why "immanent gentrification" is a growing phenomenon in American cities. They are trying to predict where the Status-L-Virus will strike next.

The unpredictability of the occurrence, and its serious impact on Chicago's demographic structure has created panic among the unaffected sections of the population. The fear of an epidemic is understandable. Logically, reactions to those affected resemble the treatment of lepers or plague victims. The Status-L-Phenomenon has lent new insistence to the hitherto unheeded voices of doomsday prediction. Even official circles are now talking of orchestrated conspiracy rather than sabotage.

The great pioneer of Hollywood, Y. Steinkopf, once postulated that conspiracy theories are "as American as Miss Liberty". This now comes across as a snide comment by the sci-fi filmmaker.

Maybe the Hollywood cult of conspiracy theories has supplied models for real life, as American conservatives never tire of asserting. Blaming precursors in the film industry, while lacking an emergency plan for a real occurrence, reflects the inability of US politics to use the time-honored fallback of government: "If you want to create a diversion from internal problems, stir up foreign policy with a big spoon." Even the slickest White House spokesman can no longer deny that all these gung-ho missions only exaggerate internal disasters. The fatal link between sci-fi plots and real events can no longer be ignored. Politics should react immediately by forming an epidemic delegation to turn words rapidly into deeds so that, in the near future, science fiction can be based on life, rather than science fiction becoming reality.

Argentinian-born Lorenzo da Silva is media critic for the newspaper "Neue Züricher Zeitung". He also lectures in theoretical approaches to international understanding at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich.

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Sox Pride Member Andy J: Gone Insane?

Roland Hess
HessKiss agency news

"I could not believe it. My friend Andy J. has been a member of the Sox Pride Club for ages. He got two tickets for tonight's game at U.S. Cellular Field. I mean, man, a Home Game, Chicago White Sox against New York Yankees", Alex Kleinberger reported to a curious crowd of reporters. "He called me up a few days ago, told me that we should

cheer their pathetic efforts to pitch, that he hoped, our weak offense would finally get it right and that he was praying for a couple of home runs. But man, he's gone crazy!"

Kleinberger continues: "The story became obscure. I was supposed to pick him up at his Lake Point Tower condo. The building had completely changed. I could not believe my eyes. Poor Andy was still wearing his pyjamas. He looked like he hadn't slept for days. When

asked about the tickets, it took him a while to find them. He just gave them to me and told me to get lost. I was so horrified I grabbed them and ran, raced down the Ryan Expressway to get to the ballpark. That is when the State Police stopped me for speeding." Kleinberger would not make any further comments and is still undergoing treatment for shock. His wife Verena Helstein Kleinberger could not comment, as she is still missing.

Social envy from outer space?

Interview by George Mullah

In the absence of satisfactory explanations of the social status losses in Chicago yesterday afternoon, suppositions are now rife that the causes may lie outside our universe. Our editor Glenn Scott interviewed Professor Chuck McGreeny, who holds the chair of extraterrestrial phenomena at Haldensburgh private university.

Professor McGreeny, might the Chicago house swap be the work of extraterrestrials?

Well, in the first instance I would be very cautious about making such an assertion. So far there are no reported observations to suggest extraterrestrial influence.

So you can't actually rule it out?

I am a scientist, not a clairvoyant. Here on earth we must always ask ourselves "cui bono"? Who benefits, who profits, from such a change. By our

standards, the lost status phenomenon observed yesterday in Chicago seems to make no sense. Of course, extraterrestrials might follow completely different reasoning. But we should first take a careful look, and see if we can discover other causes.

What else might lie behind this phenomenon?

We must wait and see whether the mysterious house swap may be attributable to some large-scale advertising initiative. A developer seeking new building work might well lie behind it.

If that were so, would it not have made more sense to transform an old building into a luxury block?

Such a further transformation may ensue, now that hundreds of cameras are focused on the houses.

That sounds far-fetched to

me. What other causes do you think possible?

Well, another conceivable cause would be what is known as a time leap, as described in quantum physics.

Please be a bit more specific.

A time leap is an aberration from the linear progression of time to which we are accustomed. Instead, time leaps ahead a bit, though the phenomenon has only been observed within local boundaries.

You mean a time leap only occurs in one place?

We do not yet know how such a time leap is triggered. First of all, very few have ever been observed. However, three time leaps within such local boundaries have never yet been observed. The most recent writing on time leaps is by the novelist Douglas Adams. Unfortunately, many of his findings have been dismissed as

pure flights of fancy.

Has such a time leap anything to do with the known experience of déjà vu?

Déjà vu is a sense of having experienced something before, whereas a time leap is as if time moves fast forward in one place. It is as if you were to age by 50 years in a morning, while your family members stayed the same age. A young person entering a time leap would overtake his grandparents in an instant - would suddenly be older than the grandparents.

In Chicago, it's as if the occupants of the affected houses have been metamorphosed with them. Is there any explanation for this?

When we have identified the cause of the house change, we will also know how the occupants have been changed.

Professor McGreeny, thank you for talking to us.

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