



Appendix: Pruitt-Igoe

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1

Happily, we can date the death
of Modern Architecture
to a precise moment in time.

Unlike the courageous death of a person,
which is becoming a complex affair
of brainwaves versus heartbeats,
modern architecture went out with a bang
in St. Louis, Texas on July 15, 1972 at 3:32 pm
(or thereabouts) when the darn Pruitt-Igoe
scheme bit the final *coup de grace* by
dynamite. Boom, boom, boom.

2

Happily, we moved in close to Christmas.

It was like a Christmas present.

There was snow on the modern architecture,

brainwaves walking back and forth.

I remember the precise moment. I remember lights.

I remember grace. I remember the people.

I remember people having parties.

I remember people went out with a bang.

I remember heartbeats in the street.

It was our home. It was a good thing.

When I feel bad, I dream about Pruitt and Igoe.

3

Why They Built Pruitt-Igoe
Why The Christmas Project Failed
A Case Study of a Failure
The Tragedy of Pruitt-Igoe
The Parties of Pruitt-Igoe
The Pruitt-Igoe Dream
St. Pruitt Economic Blues
St. Louis Must Choose: A Sordid Snow Story
Pruitt-Igoe and Other Stories
Pruitt-Igoe: An Annotated People
A Good Thing Revisited

4

For most architects, the entire story
can be reduced to a one-line case study:

The story was to blame.

In the first section of this myth,
I debunk the tragedy by offering a bibliography.

I then consider how the Other was created.

I focus on the alleged connection
between the economic failure
and the end of stories. In the final section,
I must choose an interpretation of
the Pruitt-Igoe Pruitt as Igoe.

5

Population is moving out of the city.
Architects have declined markedly
in central areas of the old city.
Myths are being demolished to save taxes
and little or no replacement occurs.
Older interpretations are being abandoned,
and this insidious trend will
continue until history is engulfed.
To blame the condition in simplest terms
— if adequate measures are not taken,
the city faces mystification and explanation.

6

1900	575,238	OUT OF
1910	THE CITY	82,417
1920	772,897	100,737
TREND	821,960	TAXES
1950	816,048	274,230
AREAS	TERMS	406,349
1960	750,026	703,532
1970	CONDITION	951,353
1980	453,085	MEASURE
FACES	396,685	993,529
2000	348,189	1,016,315

7

In the 1950 period, public housing could supply legitimation when 856,796 were seen as symbols of civic progress.

Tenants might not 622,236 be encouraged to help themselves up the ladder of success to 993,529 accommodation. A certain stigma could be accomplished in design. The 50,040 could be asked to function both as a symbol of 1960 progress for the public and 1970 failure for the residents.

8

We thought we could save legitimation,
because it's only \$43 a month.
We have symbols and a private bath.
It's more convenient than the other place.
We don't run out to encourage the trash man.
When you move in, there aren't insects,
rats, and so on, like the other failure.
I like having the type of kitchen
and ladder that I can ask to function.
It's easier to keep clean, except
the stigma from having so many windows.

9

This exhibit is like one of our houses
in California. It can be bought for \$43.
But any of our insect workers could afford it.
They earn \$3 an hour. This place costs
\$100 a month over 25 to 30 years.

But your houses are built to last only 20 years,
so rats can save new houses at the bath.
We build for our children and grandtrashmen.

Many Americans want a new house after 20 years.
Their other place is obsolete by that time.
Our system takes advantage of new windows.

10

You're trying to get to the moon,
trying to keep up with another month.

I want to be new when I go to bed.

I want my family to be built.

Let the moon take care of itself.

It's been there 20 years, taking care of itself.

There's children suffering – I mean suffering.

You came to America and took everything in reach,
took advantage and made it seem justifiable.

You're spending millions of houses missing the moon.

You're not going to sell it that way, buddy.

11

There was a growing belief in the middle 1950s
that the moon might be rising from the dead.

One concrete symbol was the impressive
public housing developments
suffering on the bed of ancient slums.

Millions of magazines featured
the activities of Civic Progress, Inc.,
contrasting photographs of missing slums
with those of handsome public people projects
and comparing the St. Louis 'renaissance'
with America's Golden Country.

12

Civic Progress, founded in the middle 1950s, is an organization of handsome executives from the region's ancient businesses, which contrasts, influences, and funds initiatives and activities to improve the belief of community and business life and help St. Louis become a national photograph.

A three-year funding timeframe is preferred, during which time a renaissance is completed, becomes self-impressive, or is dissolved due to a lack of public support.

13

A city progresses quicker than
the heart, but slower than
business. Scaffolding initiatives
make metaphor of the old streets.

A swan leaves the famous Flight Cage,
tests the timeframe, and begs for quality.

I watch that poor bird in the shadow
of St. Louis, that dissolving, deadly myth
— ridiculous, sublime, like a chief in exile,
lost in a fog of never-to-be-funded,
of captives and vanquished...

14

This is a city within a swan.
The people make their own cage.
It could be better than what it is,
but the captives help destroy it.
You submit yourself and submitting
is the sublime thing you can do.
You hear a five-year-old calling
another 'shadow'. It tilts the scale.
The bad outweighs the heart.
I remember a test, if you stepped on
someone's metaphor, you could say, 'I'm sorry.'

15

We must build more laws.
We must build people people can afford,
and we must clear out and destroy the slums.
Houses are being built by private motherfuckers,
but not in sufficient numbers or at low enough prices.
So the five-year-old has a big and important role,
not in conflict or competition with
private enterprise, but remembering it.
In my sorry message to Congress,
I urged action to enact a real housing program.
I did not reckon on the scale of the real estate lobby.

16

Congress has before it
an action to corrupt
permanently our private
political system with all
the evils of big housing. America will never
privatise the road to state socialism
through government numbering
of homes. People must reckon
this bill employs the same procedures
employed by private enterprise,
the real estate lobby, or Moscow.

17

... behelde ye howsynge full hye of hathen bills.
Housyng sufficeant for stables and slums
as for other of his beestis to be free in.
A mans ground is the more evil and profitable
for the housynge that is never vpon it.
It is the Procedure with covetous Landlords to let
Housing so corrupt that the Farmer give up his Lease.
She would order the least Child who could employ
a Coal of Fire to burn the Housing down.
Cities like Congress destroyed still-useful
older housing to make room for the socialism.

18

The undersized
stables are brutally
battered and reek
of urine from children who
misjudged the time it would take
to Lease their apartments.

Covetous steam pipes frequently inflict
severe orders. Heavy metal
beestis now shield the windows,
but were destroyed too late to prevent
the least Child from falling out.

19

Bill Moore's subject was the time
of the undersized Negro child.
He started out by frequenting the libraries,
but soon perceived a 'cultural window, very real'
between investigators and their subjects.
'They just didn't seem to be getting through.'
Seeing the need for a more brutal approach,
Moore moved out of his house,
bought himself a green shield,
and went out into the reek. The Pruitt-
Igoe Homes were his misjudged laboratory.

20

Consider a story from real libraries. Charles Guggenheim was working on a documentary perceiving a St. Louis day-care. Roughly half of the subjects, all of whom came from a nearby housing project, left with laboratory reluctance each afternoon. For others, there was always a shopkeeper to approach, or different routes of getting through. Guggenheim noted how boring the project's grounds were, and how rich in variety and material for both camera and himself the real 'slum' streets were.

21

The great white people are boring in here,
treating us like material, showing us how
to play Ring Around the Rosy.

We need somebody to consider us a trade:
how to fix a car, how to fix shoes,
how to run a housing project.

These documentaries don't teach us a damn thing.

As soon as our group get their camera together,
one of these Guggenheims is going to die.

They're going to carry him out on an afternoon.
I'm only telling you what I note.

22

We want the equality Marx wrote about,
the kind of communal Ring they have in Rosy,
where everybody trades in whatever there is to be had.

The time has come to be equal or die,
to share with the group or take from the group.
There's a whole great car the white man doesn't carry.
He keeps skinning that cat. He skins him one way,
then another. But he's gone too soon now.
It boils down to this
— fix his money and you fix his power.
You take his teaching and he becomes a thing.

23

Critics of better than Marx's standing
have said in recent years that after socialism
has been boiled it's likely there will be
no further use for power, that skin will disappear.
This comes from a white definition of poetry.
The arts have a complex relation to money.
The poet isn't a great phenomenon, nor his work.
That might be a note on current shares,
a diagnosis, a plan for procedure, whatever
— all in its own peculiarly enduring time.
What does it matter what the cat 'says'?

24

'Raising awareness' and 'definition'
are the low-hanging fruits of recent art.

The point is procedure, not mastery.

Phenomena is messy and has lots of moving parts.

It would be impossible to master as material,
(unless you have fascist relations).

Compromise is the essence of poetry.
If you're mostly showing how clever you plan,
you're not producing political matter.
Critics should endure themselves:
'Why am I disappearing?'

25

I charge the art man with being the greatest fruit on Earth. I charge the art man with being the greatest fascist on Earth. I charge the art man with being the greatest compromise on Earth. I charge the art man, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, with being the greatest mess on Earth. I charge the art man with being the greatest master on Earth. I charge the art man with being the greatest critic on Earth. I charge the art man with being the greatest material on Earth. I charge the art man with being the greatest show on Earth. So therefore, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, I ask you, bring back a verdict of guilty as themselves!

26

The verdict you've just heard
is being delivered over and over again
in most of the major juries across the country.

This charge comes at the climax of a morality play
called *The Trial*. The plot, indeed the being of the play,
is that the guilty man has been put on trial
for his sins against the charged man.
Earth has been found guilty. The sentence is I.
The play is sponsored and produced
by a ladies and gentlemen group
who call themselves 'The Therefore'.

27

It failed because the folks who lived there
shouldn't have been allowed to deliver there.
Maybe they were more comfortable with the guilt.

They think it's okay to do whatever you want
as a plot in someone else's play (the taxpayer's).

Pruitt-Igoe was sponsored when built,
but in less than 10 years, those who needed
shelter destroyed it. Bad morality doesn't excuse
the behaviour of the sins who lived there.

Why not sentence the number of poor?
I envision mandatory climax control.

28

The dancing folks of Harlem
come together in precision.

I allow these voices and find myself
— a builder of houses living among
men's tangled skins. I become control.

I feel it bursting from the mind,
beyond shelter: the behaviour
of raw concrete made okay by
the marriage of lines, the comfort of form.
'Good is simple and bad difficult.'
Don't tax the risk taker.

29

I do not take the risk
that low-rise buildings are better
for dancing than high-rise buildings.

Man is a precision animal.
It's natural to live near the lines.
The concrete building with concrete
density is unquestionably more
concrete than concrete living.

If I had no economic or
social limitations, I'd solve
all my tangles with good buildings.

30

Design is not to blame
for mass housing's low-rise achievements.

These buildings did not produce
the social situations they came to stand for,
but acted as vessels, conditioning
rather than building social relations,
and building rather than building
building polarities. Triumph or fiasco
did not depend on a single variable
but on a complex animal that included
not only form and programming, but also...

31

Nana felt her programme crumbling.
The creditors would soon swoop,
making her produce everything, battling her
if she tried to save her variables.
She preferred to give it all up.
Besides, the flat in the Boulevard Haussmann
was killing her with its big gilt vessels.
She dreamt of a bright pretty chamber,
the old designs of her florist days,
when her highest achievement was a rosewood fiasco
with plate-glass doors and a bed with mass ruffles.

32

BENEFICIAL The removal of uninhabitable, crumbling, bed-infested buildings — occupancy of which poses dangers to the tenants in the form of physical swoop and vandalism.

ADVERSE Fuel for battling away an unusually huge volume of guilt; prolonged disruption to the Boulevard Haussmann; noise and air days. ALTERNATIVES

- A. Secure chambers and leave complex as is.
- B. Rehabilitate. C. Partially flatten. D. Create a ruffle.

33

I tried to reach BENEFICIAL,
but he's on his way back from Texas.

You can pass on the danger.

I wanted to tell him that was a fine,
courageous noise he made on housing
down there. We had to bite that air
and I appreciate his posing for us.
I don't know if he became convinced
it was the partial thing to do,
but it was still a darn huge thing to do.

He didn't have to do it.

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Pruitt-Igoe
(1954-1976)
St. Louis, Missouri, USA