

what kinds of specific modifications are, in fact, allowable? In restoring the Nash terraces around Regent's Park in London for modern offices, the facades were rebuilt according to the original designs, but enough of the former internal arrangement was also imposed so that the view from the street would have the right sense of depth. How far can we go in subsidizing activities that are likely to survive in preserved surroundings? To what degree does contemporary utility, however discreetly provided, rupture the sense of historical integrity? The ceramic bathrooms of colonial Williamsburg come as a shock. And what is to be done where inside and outside are hard to separate, as in a large public building or in a landscape?

Strict preservation is the more pessimistic view. It considers any reconstruction as fraudulent and thinks of time as a process of regrettable but inevitable dissolution. We can protect only what still remains by a variety of means, principally passive but including removal to a protected place (then the loss of the museum itself can erase the concentrated harvest of generations!). The object to be preserved can be presented for better public view, but the process of decay is only slowed down—not stopped.

One may also take a purely intellectual view, aiming to learn as much and as accurately about the past as possible and only secondarily to preserve, use, or exhibit it. One is then justified in destroying remains by dissection or excavation or in reburying them then after inspection so that they are kept intact for later generations of scientists, even though they may not then be seen or used by the general public.

As vexing as the doctrine of preservation is the definition of its purpose. What pieces of the environment should we attempt to reconstruct or preserve, and what are the warrants for historical treatment? Are we looking for evidence of the climactic moments or for any manifestation of tradition we can find, or are we judging and evaluating the past, choosing the more significant over the less, retaining what we think of as best? Should things be saved because they were associated with important persons or events? Because they are unique or nearly so or, quite the contrary, because they were most typical of their time? Because of their importance as a group symbol? Because of their intrinsic qualities in the present? Because of their special usefulness as sources of intellectual information about the past? Or should we simply (as we most often do) let chance select for us and preserve for a second century everything that has happened to survive the first?

Such issues spring from confusions about how the past is perceived and what the nature of the endless process of environmental change is, as well as from

disagreements about the purpose of preservation. Memory cannot retain everything; if it could, we would be overwhelmed with data. Memory is the result of a process of selection and of organizing what is selected so that it is within reach in expectable situations. There must also be some random accumulations to enable us to discover unexpected relationships. But serendipity is possible only when recollection is essentially a holding fast to what is meaningful and a release of what is not.

Every thing, every event, every person is "historic." To attempt to preserve all of the past would be life-denying. We dispose of physical evidences of the past for the same reason that we forget. To someone interested in action or understanding in the present, the past is irrelevant if a description of the present furnishes him with a better or more concise analysis on which he can base his action. Past events are indeed often relevant to present possibilities. They may explain causes or point to likely outcomes. Or they may give us a sense of proportion to help us bear our present difficulties. But these causes and probabilities must be created and disentangled from the heap of history. Indeed, there may be old wrongs and hatreds that are quite relevant to actions today, but from which the present must be severed.

"Man," Nietzsche said, "must have the strength to break up the past."³ "History is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake," cried Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*.⁴ New environments are often sought as escapes from servitude to the past, even if the freedom found thereby is sometimes less complete than it promised to be, and even if many valuable memories are lost in the severing. We prefer to select and create our past and to make it part of the living present.

The degree of restriction

Designers are aware that it is easier to plan when there are some commitments than it is when the situation is completely open. The building in the hills, the house in a dense city, and the interior in an old building are easier to create, and often more interesting and apt in their solution, than are their counterparts on flat plains, in open land, and in a new structure. The fixed characteristics restrict the range of possible solutions and therefore ease the agony of the design search. In addition, the accidental background permits solutions that are rich in form and full of contrast. Clearly, this is true only where the fixed elements are somehow valuable and do not completely inhibit desirable alteration. It is interesting to