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The Architecture Profession and the Public

Leopold Eidlitz's "Discourses Between Two T-Squares"

Since the beginnings of professionalization in the nineteenth century, architects have struggled to find ways to reach a broad public. Leopold Eidlitz, one of the founding members of the American Institute of Architects, published a series of essays in *The Crayon* in 1858 that attempted, through the use of popular literary forms, to do just that. Eidlitz addressed the "Discourses Between Two T-Squares" to a general audience and hoped that their humor and scathing caricatures would educate non-professionals about the practical and theoretical intricacies of architecture. Eidlitz's attempt at advocacy sheds light on the long-standing difficulty that architects have creating a resonant public image.

Introduction

As part of the celebration of its 150th anniversary in 2007, the American Institute of Architects (AIA) launched a "Blueprint for America" that featured "community service" as one of its central themes. With projects that highlighted "grassroots" initiatives, "cultural connectivity," "public awareness," and "outreach," the AIA and its chapters continued the project, begun by its founders in 1857, of trying to connect the profession to a wider public.[1] With alarming statistics about the supposed irrelevance of architects to the buildings process in America—one oft-quoted figure suggests that ninety-five percent of buildings are made without architects—the mission of the AIA to prove the necessity of architects and design professionals seems to be more critical than ever.[2]

As contemporary architects contemplate how to bridge the divide between the profession and the public, it is well worth remembering that the disjunction has been present since the beginnings of professionalization in the nineteenth century. With the founding of the AIA in 1857, American architects began a concerted effort to raise the standing of architecture and the profession in the public eye. Architects despaired, before the Civil War, of proving that they had special skills worth paying for and founded the AIA in no small part to address public ignorance of architecture. Though the early AIA is often considered to have been an ineffectual group, many of its members did in fact make attempts to address these substantial issues.

Leopold Eidlitz, a founding member of the group who had been born in Prague and immigrated to New York in 1843 at the age of twenty, was particularly vocal about the need to push beyond the AIA's rarefied boundaries.[3] Eidlitz's series of essays called the "T-Squares," published in a widely circulated art and literary journal called *The Crayon*, is a very early attempt to popularize the image of the architect not through community service but through humor and storytelling. Eidlitz believed in advocating for architecture through design itself, but felt that literary texts, particularly in popular form, had the potential to reach a broader audience. Looking back at the success and failure of this series of essays is enormously instructive in thinking about how difficult it has always been for architects to find a voice that resonates with the public outside the confines of the discipline.

The Early AIA: Reaching the Public

In antebellum America, there was no shortage of writing and thinking about architecture. A. J. Downing's series of books on houses, for example, which culminated in his 1850 *The Architecture of Country Houses*, were immensely popular and spread ideas about appropriate styles and materials far and wide. Builders' guides like Asher Benjamin's *Builder's Companion* (1806) went through edition after edition, diffusing a straightforward notion of construction and style across the country. Even Richard Upjohn, the most esteemed member of the American architectural profession before the Civil War, published his *Rural Architecture* (1852) to suggest proper plans and construction to clients beyond his geographic reach.[4]

But in the 1850s, a new generation of architects became dissatisfied with this public portrayal of architecture as a popular art accessible to all. With the founding of the AIA, a critical mass of architects, located largely in New York, began to meet regularly to discuss how to change the perception of architecture in the United States. They hoped to raise standards of architectural education, to regularize laws concerning remuneration for design work, and, more subjectively, to raise the public's level of respect for architects' specialized skills and knowledge.[5] From the beginning then, the AIA's goals had an inherent tension in elevating the status of the architect but also finding a way to make the public embrace that elevation. In other words, the AIA sought both to make architecture a fine art and to find a way to make the public appreciate and desire that art. Education, both of architects and of the public, was a key to this goal.

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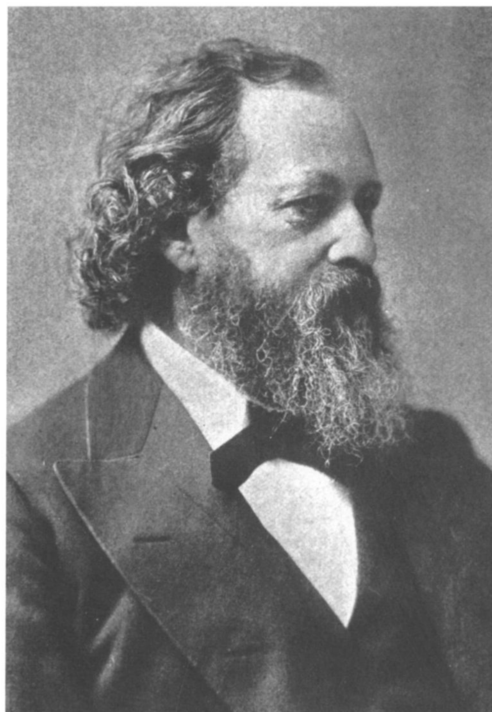
Education could consist of designing good buildings, providing concrete examples of the benefits of good design. But it could also consist of advocacy, persuasive public speaking, and writing about the same issues.

In 1858, the New York architect Leopold Eidlitz, who was one of the founding members of the AIA, published a series of eight essays, the so-called "Discourses Between Two T-Squares," describing and critiquing the inner workings of the American architectural profession. Eidlitz wrote the series not primarily for his fellow architects and artists but for potential clients and interested lay people, hoping both to educate them about the intricacies of the design process and to foster a new respect for the architect as artist, technician, and businessman. Though this was a common theme for architects in the 1850s, Eidlitz addressed it in an entirely new way. He shed the usual cool voice of rational professionalism and adopted a profoundly mannered literary style that was designed both to amuse and to provoke. The "Discourses" were part Socratic dialogue, part *Bildungsroman*, and part Gothic novel, filled with anecdotal tales of deceit, intrigue, and license. No other American architect attempted any such popularization of architectural issues.

Eidlitz (1823–1908) was indeed an unusual architect for the American mid-nineteenth century (Figure 1).[6] He was Jewish, born in Prague, and trained in the technical sciences at its Realschule before moving to Vienna as a young man to attend business school at the Technische Hochscule. When he emigrated to America in 1843, he brought his central European outlook with him. In America, he found that his Germanic ideas about creating a functional and organic style of architecture adapted to the exigencies of the modern age dovetailed neatly with American ideas about nature, art, and poetry promoted by the popularity of Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendentalism, which itself had roots in the German idealist philosophy of Kant. Eidlitz believed deeply in an organic conception of form, in which the ideas and emotions inherent to the building program would generate composition, construction, and ornament. He quickly found clients sympathetic to his transcendental thinking and built a successful practice in New York based in his modernizations of *Rundbogenstil*, Gothic, Moorish, and Byzantine forms (Figure 2).

1. Leopold Eidlitz (1823–1908), in about 1870. As published in *Architectural Record* (September 1908).



In the AIA's first ten years, before his acrimonious departure from the group in 1868, Eidlitz was an extremely active member, giving frequent papers at its meetings and lobbying on its behalf before the New York state legislature in Albany. Like his fellow AIA members, he believed that education was the key to creating a new American architecture. Eidlitz initially prepared the first two entries in the "Discourses Between Two T-Squares" for presentation to the AIA. The membership greeted the papers warmly and voted special thanks to Eidlitz for their diversion. After this initial success, Eidlitz prepared additional entries in the series strictly for publication as unsigned essays in the art and literary journal *The Crayon*.[7]

The Crayon was a short-lived but influential publication that focused largely on issues surrounding the art of the transcendental Hudson River School painters.[8] *The Crayon*'s pages were thus filled with articles extolling the virtues of nature and seeking a new artistic idiom for the modern world, ideas that Eidlitz responded to and incorporated into his own work. The AIA also published its proceedings in *The Crayon*, and the inclusion of articles on architecture in an art journal reinforced the association of architecture with the fine arts of painting, sculpture, and poetry.

The Discourses

The Discourses center on a conversation between two T-Squares in an architect's office, one an old and venerable T-Square made from a German Linden tree and the other an inexperienced upstart made of shiny American steel. These talking T-Squares become known to us through their owner, an architect named Tom Pinch, who returns to his darkened and deserted office one evening to the sound of whispering from a remote corner. The architect, who confesses his judgment may have been affected by being "weary and heated," nonetheless strains to attune himself to the nocturnal "undertones" and discovers, to his surprise, that the two T-Squares are conversing, even jangling themselves, together. He proceeds to listen to their tales and then to report what he heard through memory to us, the readers.

Through the series of eight essays, the Linden T-Square relates, in response to questions by the Steel T-Square, a series of narratives involving two New York–based architects, first Philologus Brown

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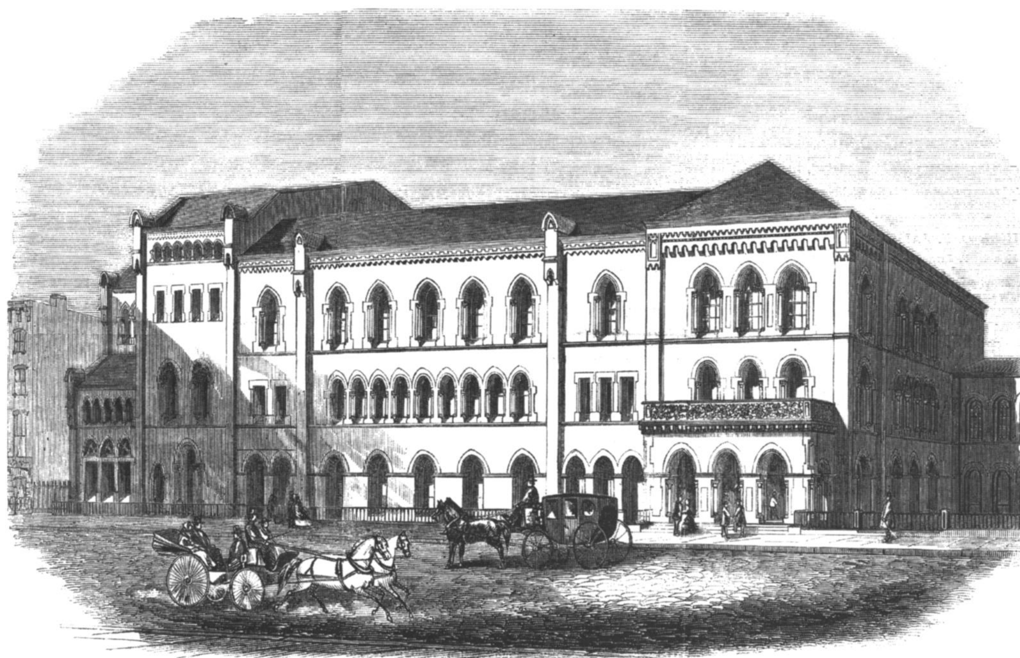
2. Leopold Eidlitz, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Montague Street (1861, burned 1907). The Brooklyn Academy of Music is an early example of Eidlitz's conception of the organic, with the building subdivided into four parts with four separate rooflines to reflect the different function of each of its parts. From right to left: the entry pavilion, the theater (which ran parallel to the street), the backstage area, and the green room. *Harper's Weekly* (February 2, 1861).



and second the aforementioned Tom Pinch. These narratives center on the interaction of Brown and Pinch with clients and employees, including a member of the clergy in search of a church design, a city-dweller in search of a country house, and an entire building committee led by Mr. Cute Green. Along the way, the Linden T-Square imparts important lessons about education, social class, wealth and economics, building science and construction, labor practices, and the art of architecture. From an initial mutual suspicion of each other's motives, the two T-Squares end up in sympathy, with the Steel T-Square learning to respect its elder's experience and the Linden T-Square coming to recognize the potential of the younger generation.

The Linden T-Square begins by reminiscing about its early days as a tree on the banks of the Rhine River in Germany, days of "baronial . . . genteel idleness."[9] Chopped down to pay for the Parisian excesses of the German baron's son, the tree is transformed into utilitarian T-squares, drawing boards, and triangles. Eidlitz, who as a Bohemian Jew born and raised in the Biedermeier Prague of the Habsburg Empire fled the strictures of imperial and courtly society for the openness and freedom of American democracy, clearly stated his antipathy for inherited wealth and privilege. A society based in pragmatic assessments of individual aptitude and utility was preferable to the decaying monarchies of Europe.

But how did one pursue a "pragmatic" or "practical" life in America? The Linden T-Square finds the terms mightily abused after it crosses the Atlantic and comes into the possession of Philologus Brown, a carpenter and builder of stairs who, after the financial panic of 1837 dries up the market for stair-building, decides to become an architect. Brown is a self-described "practical architect" by this, we discover, he means that he is not a "theoretical architect" but one who eschews the "hifoluten" aspects of design in favor of the practical advice found in the builders' guides of the day. Brown is particularly partial to a book he comfortably refers to by name simply as "Nicholson," an "old friend" whom he turns to for all matters related to architecture, which begin and end exclusively with the five classical orders, from the Tuscan to the Corinthian. Eidlitz was undoubtedly referring to the work of the British mathematician and builder Peter Nicholson, who published several guides popular in America. Nicholson's *Student's Instructor in Drawing and Working the Five Orders* (1823, Figure 3) was just the kind of work Philologus Brown depended on. Brown recommended the same design to every client: a simple box embellished by the Doric order for cheap projects and the Corinthian for expensive. Brown found the Ionic, with its curving ovules, too difficult to draw and sought to avoid it. He considered the Gothic to be just one more order and rejected it vociferously as "a lot of flummery without any sense, a contrivance of the barbarous nations of olden times, when science wasn't discovered yet."[10] Brown contrives to draw business his way by "drumming" or "running to every one who threatens to build a house or a store, and offering one's services, until the proprietor thinks the easiest way to get rid of you is to employ you."[11] After casting these aspersions on Brown's character and abilities, Eidlitz does acknowledge that he is at least honest, hardworking, and shrewd.

Brown, in his simplicity and comparative ignorance, is the opposite extreme of "baronial

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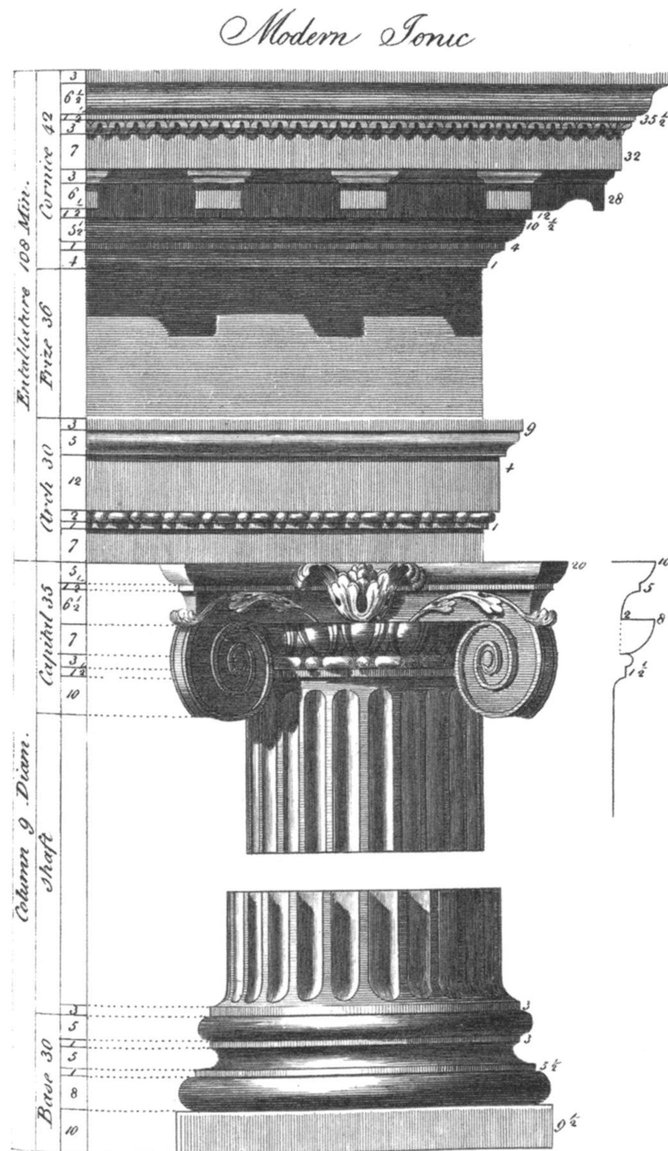
idleness." He is the epitome of what Eidlitz called the "go-aheadativeness of young America," in which young men believed that simply setting themselves vigorously and earnestly to a task meant certain success.[12] Eidlitz asserted that an architect must fall between these two extremes. He needed the erudition of the upper classes and the energy of the worker, the pragmatism of Brown and the pretension of the old Linden tree.

The character of Tom Pinch, introduced fully in the fourth installment of the series, more nearly meets Eidlitz's estimation of the proper architect, one of the new generation of the 1850s, possessed of "younger, more vigorous and better educated minds under a patronage becoming daily more refined in taste and more critical in judgment."[13] In Pinch, we see the mind and practice of an architect turned to the proper subjects: the harmony of site, materials, and ornament, an emphasis on discussions with clients about their hopes and aspirations for the building, and a general understanding that architecture should be much more about representing people and places than following stylistic rules and precedents. The essential differences between Brown and Pinch thus lay not only in their educations but also in their temperaments, expectations, and attitudes toward both history and modern design.

By the 1840s, while American architects of a literary frame of mind focused on the production of popular pattern books, philosophers like Emerson and artists like Horatio Greenough turned critical eyes on the theoretical framework of American architecture. Both Emerson and Greenough promoted the idea of a new American style, one that did not imitate the classical forms of Greece or Rome but that used the underlying principles of nature and democracy to inspire a functional and organic modern style. Emerson decried the "plain and poor" buildings of America and envisioned a day when architects would create buildings that embodied the spirit and landscape of the young country.[14] Greenough even more specifically



3. The "Modern" Ionic order, from Peter Nicholson, *The Student's Instructor in Drawing and Working the Five Orders of Architecture*, 2nd ed. (London: W. Stratford for J. Taylor at the Architectural Library, 1804). The *Instructor*, originally published in 1795, went through many editions in England and the U.S., including an 1837 edition published in New York by *The Railroad Journal*. (Courtesy Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.)

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decried the prevalence of the Greek Revival. The same style and form would not suit for the new building types of the young democracy, and America was "destined to form a new style of architecture."[15]

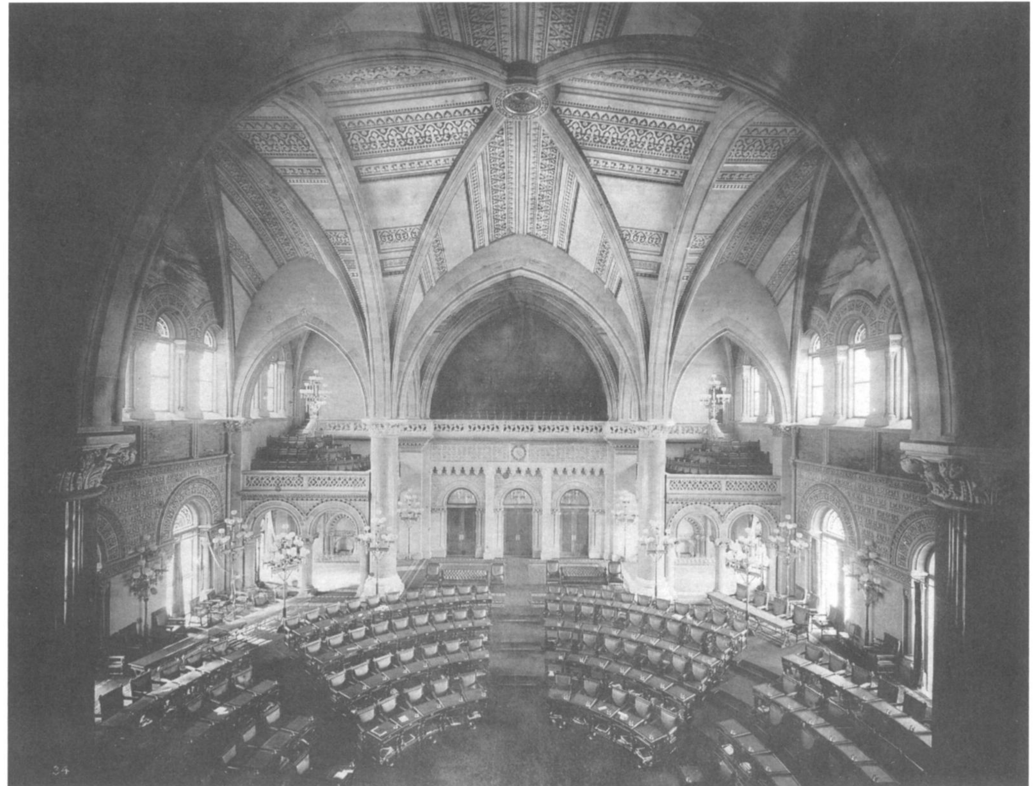
In Pinch, Eidlitz created a model of this modern architect, one who eschewed the Greek Revival temple as a proper form for every bank, house, prison, and church in America. In rejecting the classical work done in the 1830s by the previous generation of architects, like Thomas U. Walter of Philadelphia and Ithiel Town of New York, Pinch embraced the Gothic as providing a rational system of construction and ornament that could be easily adapted to the landscapes and cultural mores of America. Eidlitz's Assembly Chamber at the New York State Capitol at Albany (1876–1879) showed his own ability to reinterpret and abstract Gothic structural form in the service of democracy (Figure 4).

On the other hand, Pinch was leery of the idea of a new American style. His interactions with Mr. Gray, "a man of taste," show his discomfort with abandoning tradition and practicality in search of the purely new. Gray hires Pinch to design a country house at his estate on the bank of the Hudson River, an estate where Gray has collected a mix of old farm buildings with modern porches and sculpture appended.

Pinch and Gray's discussions of architecture proceed poorly. Pinch's queries about the landscape and its natural beauties bring forth Gray's desire to dig up a hill and move it so his estate can be better viewed by passing steamers. Pinch introduces the topic of contemporary church design, and Gray encourages Pinch to be daringly original:

> We don't want this stuff any longer. We want an American style of architecture. If I were you, Mr. Pinch, if I had your genius, I would build the church round, with an entrance [door halfway up so as to ascend to it with a pair of stairs and then go down again into the church], and a steeple laid down lengthways on the ground. Then the people would say, What is that? Ah! That's something new! What a genius Mr. Pinch must be![16]

4. Assembly Chamber, New York State Capitol at Albany, 1876–1879. Though this space is often described as Gothic Revival, Eidlitz's use of a single-rib vault to enclose the immense volume of the chamber is more Roman in conception and is typical of his ability to reinterpret structural prototypes. As published in Paul A. Chadbourne, *Public Service of the State of New York* (Boston, MA: Osgood, 1882).



Pinch is horrified by the suggestion that an architect willfully make arbitrary design decisions based on a search for novelty. Recombining and jumbling the traditional parts of a church in pursuit of creating a new fashion was to Pinch an "indecency."[17] After this conversation, Pinch nobly refuses on principle to work any longer for Gray or to accept any money from him because he realizes that he cannot produce the fanciful concoctions Gray desires and still maintain his professional self-image. This kind of economic self-sacrifice is one that Eidlitz, through the character of Pinch, believed necessary for architects to make for the sake of their art. Later in the series, Pinch declares, "I value my reputation as an architect higher than anything you can offer."[18]

By the end of the series, Brown, after retiring from architecture, has died from eating sixty-two bad oysters, and Pinch is embroiled in a drawn-out conflict with an imperious individual named Cute Green. Green is the chair of a building committee for a Congregationalist church in Connecticut that constantly changes its demands for its architect. After awarding the commission to Pinch, Green first seeks to undermine the builders' bidding

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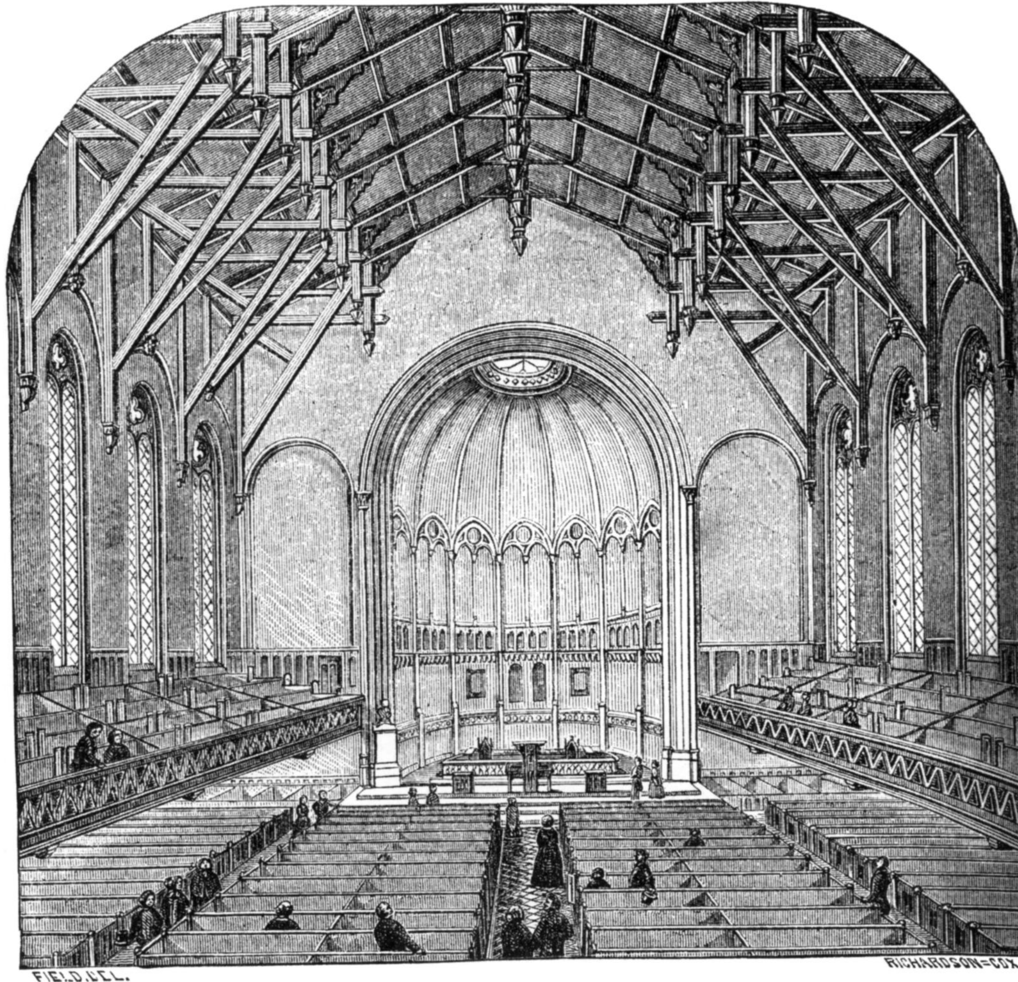
5. Leopold Eidlitz and Charles Otto Blesch, St. George's Episcopal Church, New York, 1846–1848. As published in *Putnam's Magazine* (1853).



St. George's.—Interior.

process and then proceeds to demand changes in the church's plan: "You have designed us *a church* . . . but we don't want a church—we want a hall to preach in."[19] After reaching a détente on this issue, Green next attacks the use of columns to support the seating galleries over the church's aisles by enlisting the support of the eminent Rev. Dr. Lunatic Ripper who writes that "columns inside a Protestant church are a nuisance conducive to popery and eternal perdition."[20] Once again, aided by patience, perseverance, and the presence of one wise committee member, Deacon Sharp, Pinch is able to prevail and preserve his design.

The Architect as Protagonist

This conflict, as most of the stories told in the Discourses, is surely based on Eidlitz's own experiences. Eidlitz designed and built six Congregationalist churches in New England towns during the 1850s, one each in Greenwich, Norwich, Norwalk, Stratford, and New London, Connecticut, and another in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Eidlitz's first church design, for St. George's Episcopal Church in New York (1846–1848), done in partnership with the German architect Charles Otto Blesch, had cantilevered seating galleries of cast iron, eliminating the need for supporting columns that obstructed parishioners' view of the preacher (Figure 5). St. George's low-church Episcopal priest, the Rev. Stephen Tyng, famously demanded a sparse and unornamented church, furnished with utmost simplicity. Eidlitz recalled him demanding, "Not an altar, a table. A table, do you understand, that you must be able to see under and walk around."[21] Eidlitz delivered an immense undifferentiated interior volume based on the German protestant *Hallenkirche* type without the subdivisions and hierarchical liturgical spaces typical of Gothic cathedrals and Catholic and Episcopalian churches.

The further one gets into the Discourses, the clearer it becomes that Eidlitz created Pinch in his own self-image. Pinch's insistence on Gothic constructional principles, on the supremacy of nature as a guide for design, and his principled dealings with contractors and difficult clients represented the architect as Eidlitz wished him to be: urbane, but still in touch with the common man; erudite, but still in tune to practical and material issues. Pinch, while confronted with one ungrateful and ignorant client after another, never loses his faith in humanity or in architecture as a means of engaging humanity's noblest ideals: "It has been advanced here that a church is simply a place where a number of people forming a congregation are to be comfortably seated, to see each other, and to listen to a sermon. . . . I would ask one question: is not a church also the house of God, a place of worship, of prayer, of praise? Should it not . . . possess all those architectural features which awaken in the

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6. Leopold Eidlitz and Henry Fernbach, Temple Emanu-El, Fifth Avenue, 43rd Street, New York, 1866–1868. Demolished 1927. As published in *Architectural Record* (September 1908).

human breast devotion, humility, repentance, and the love and fear of God?"[22] Through Pinch, Eidlitz projected his own belief in architecture as tool for people and communities to express their "zeal" and their "spirit"; his Temple Emanu-El (1866–1868), once located at Fifth Avenue and 43rd Street in New York, was a tour de force of light, structure, and ornament (Figure 6).

By contrast, Eidlitz's attitude toward the character of the practical builder Philologus Brown appears at first glance to be elitist and patronizing.[23] There is certainly an arrogance to his treatment of these characters, but to focus on this arrogance is to miss Eidlitz's larger message about architects and their relationships to clients, mechanics, builders, carpenters, and bricklayers.

Eidlitz does indeed privilege the role of architect as the artist, the guiding hand that lays out the tasks for teams of laborers to follow. But he does not at all underestimate the skill, the ability, and the knowledge of the other members of the building trades. In his critique of Brown, Eidlitz scaldingly criticizes him for failing to understand the role and tasks of stonecutters, for whom Brown created extra work by insisting on unnecessary carved details that undermined the solidity of the building's structure.[24] The role of the architect is to understand all aspects of the building process and to coordinate intelligently and sensitively the efforts of engineers, masons, plumbers, carpenters—anyone and everyone involved in the process. His obligation is to design a building that makes sense to the people building it as well as to the people who will use it. This is far from a patronizing attitude. Rather it is one that calls for clear and rational divisions among the workers in an increasingly complex and specialized construction process. An architect who did not understand and respect these processes was doomed to failure.

It is clients, however, who come in for the harshest drubbing by the two T-Squares. Gray and Green are both pretentious and ignorant men, emboldened by their financial success to believe in their cultural and intellectual prowess as well. They lecture their architect, Pinch, on the proper rules of design and of fashion, demanding that he obey their fancies and whims rather than his own architectural expertise. In the Discourses, Eidlitz tried to publicly humiliate clients like Gray and Green to show, through broadly sketched stereotypes, the meanness and self-interest of their ways. Clients, too, had a proper place in the hierarchy Eidlitz envisioned for the building process, and that place, as with carpenters and plumbers, was beneath the architect. Open communication between architect and client would establish the building's idea, its budget, its materials, and its planning, but the client's role was largely to accept the architect's

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interpretation of his demands. Architects needed clients like Deacon Sharp, who understood Pinch's expertise and respected his counsel, for architecture to flourish. Through the T-Squares essays, and their public exposure of a variety of architectural misconducts, Eidlitz hoped to create a new generation of well-behaved and appreciative Deacon Sharps.

Literary Form

The importance of the Discourses lies in Eidlitz's adoption of popular literary devices and forms to discuss ideas he addressed in a far more intellectual fashion in other essays. Eidlitz lectured and wrote extensively on issues of patronage, aesthetics, education, and style in a "professional" voice in the late 1850s. These essays were also published in the pages of *The Crayon*, though, unlike the Discourses, they were signed. Eidlitz's two-part "On Aesthetics" is typical of this other mode of writing, far more academic, more formal, and constructed in a proof-like progression of points, much in the same manner as the German philosophy that Eidlitz read voraciously. In "On Aesthetics," Eidlitz took up Baumgarten's study of aesthetics and defined a "science of the beautiful" by conceiving of architecture in a Kantian dualism: architecture could be "perceived only through the medium of sight" and therefore depended exclusively on "distribution of masses, of light and shade, and of color" for its effects.[25] But Eidlitz also worked in a more Hegelian notion of the importance of art and architecture, that it expressed the essence of the human spirit. Architecture was "the art of imbuing with beauty and expression monuments representing human purposes and ideas."[26] This essay, dense and full of specialized terms and concerns, would have been of little, if any, interest to the general public. As it was, very few members of the AIA found much to interest them in Eidlitz's abstruse philosophical thinking.[27]

But in the Discourses, Eidlitz chose to abandon this academic style in favor of literary and novelistic conventions. One important reason for this choice was, of course, to poke fun at himself and the seriousness of his usual endeavors. But more important was Eidlitz's desire to reach a broader, nonarchitectural audience. The overarching purpose of this series of narratives and characterizations was to educate the general reader about the difficulties that architects faced in the pursuit of their art and profession. By abandoning his usual academic style, Eidlitz hoped that his message would reach the general public, the broad audience of educated people who read *The Crayon*. The Dialogues' novelistic approach, with its embedded, episodic narratives, linked the discussion of architectural issues to everyday forms of expression and dialogue rather than privileging the jargon of the professional sphere.

From the beginning, as Pinch enters his dark office after a long, weary day to encounter mysterious nocturnal whisperings, Eidlitz used devices from the popular literature of the day. The Gothic novels of Ann Radcliffe and Horace Walpole, the fantastic tales of Edgar Allan Poe and Washington Irving, the sentimental reveries of Donald Grant Mitchell—all were immensely popular in the United States in the 1850s. Strange things happened in the gloaming hours. Ghosts and apparitions appeared, wreaking havoc and teaching moral lessons. Eidlitz took his cues from this literary world when he created the T-Squares scenario, using its conventions and its emphasis on satire and dialogue as a means of imparting an all-important moral lesson.

Using an American rather than German model for this foray into popular literature was essential. The most immediate model for Eidlitz's Dialogues can be found in the work of Washington Irving, the first internationally celebrated American author. Eidlitz had, in 1859, joined the Century Association, an exclusive private New York club for authors and artists where Irving cast a long shadow. Irving published *The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* in 1819, and it was an immediate success in both America and England. In the *Sketchbook*, Irving intertwined European literary traditions with American perspectives and stories. While most of the book focuses on Crayon's travels around England, other stories have become classics of American story telling, including "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" and "Rip Van Winkle." Earlier, in 1808–1809, Irving had also written and published with his friend and brother a humorous magazine filled with sketches and parodies of New York personages entitled *Salmagundi*, which also appears to have influenced Eidlitz's turn at fiction (Figure 7). Irving's introduction to *Salmagundi* could easily serve as the introduction to Eidlitz's Discourses:

> Our intention is simply to instruct the young, reform the old, correct the town, and castigate the age; this is an arduous task, and therefore we undertake it with confidence. We intend for this purpose to present a striking picture of the town; and as everybody is anxious to see his own phiz on canvas, however stupid or ugly it may be, we have no doubt but the whole town will flock to our exhibition. Our picture will necessarily include a vast variety of figures; and should any gentleman or lady be displeased with the inveterate truth of their likenesses, they may ease their spleen by laughing at those of their neighbors—that being what *we* understand by *poetical justice*.[28]

The work was satirical in intent, with all parties subjected to unflattering scrutiny. The ultimate goal was to learn, through this unflinching look at society, how not to be. This was precisely the point of Eidlitz's Discourses as well.

Beyond Irving's satirical concerns, both the form and the content of his *Sketchbook* are important for Eidlitz's T-Squares. In both works, the author attempts to disappear behind a fictional narrator. Geoffrey Crayon is not just a character in the *Sketchbook* but the "author" of the work.

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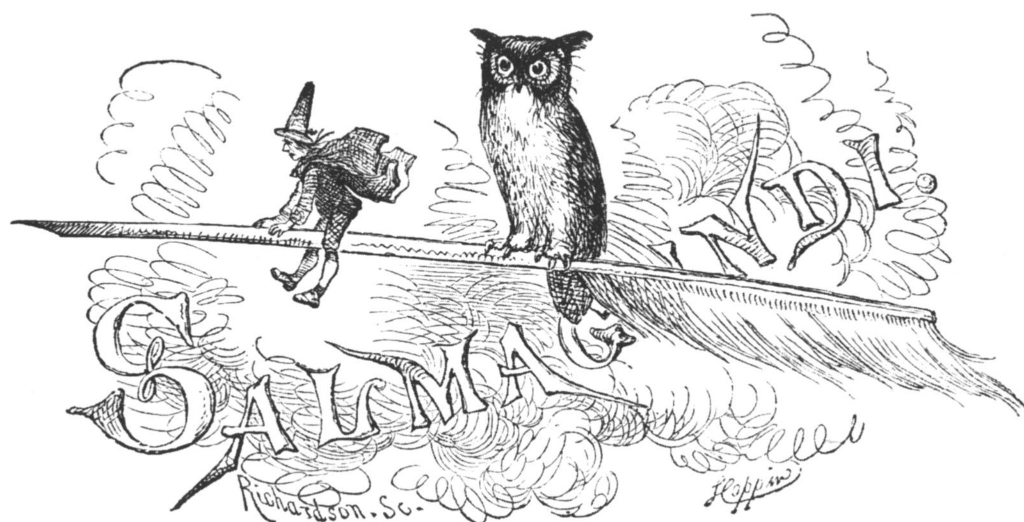
7. Augustus Hoppin's frontispiece cartoon of the "wizard's pen," so scathingly deployed in *Salmagundi* (New York: G. P. Putnam, 1860, originally published 1807–1808).



Irving gives Crayon his own voice, even as he tells the stories that Irving himself has created. Similarly, Eidlitz hid himself behind two levels of narration in the Discourses, even as he used his own architectural experiences to fuel the narrative. The T-Squares tell both Pinch's and Brown's stories, as Crayon tells Irving's. And particularly important is the link between Geoffrey Crayon, the character, and the journal *The Crayon* itself, with the title being a continued play on the literary and artistic connotations of the word "crayon." The idea of a literary "sketch book," as embodied in Irving's *Geoffrey Crayon* or Dickens's later *Sketches by Boz* (1836), emerged in the nineteenth century as one way of mediating between the high art of literature and the demand for shorter, more digestible tales of crime and misadventure popular with the general public.[29] Eidlitz's adoption of a serialized series of sketches that combined high and low art is clearly connected to this form of popular writing.

Beyond the general context of *The Crayon*, it is one of Geoffrey Crayon's sketches, "The Mutability of Literature," that connects Eidlitz's work with Irving's. In this brief piece, Crayon ponders the condition of his own profession as a writer and the place of literature in the modern world. It begins as Crayon seeks out the library of Westminster Abbey one afternoon to enjoy "that luxury of wandering thought which one is apt to dignify with the name of reflection."[30] After picking up a small book, he finds himself in the midst of a reverie that leads, much as it had for Tom Pinch, to a strange conversation:

> Instead of reading, however, I was beguiled by the solemn monastic air, and lifeless quiet of the place, into a train of musing. . . . While I sat half murmuring, half meditating these unprofitable speculations, with my head resting on my hand, I was thrumming with the other hand upon the quarto, until I accidentally loosened the clasps, when, to my utter astonishment, the little book gave two or three yawns, like one awakening from a deep sleep; then a husky hem, and at length began to talk.[31]

The quarto bemoans its current forgotten state while Crayon defends the ever-changing nature of the literary world. While the book believes that popular works by esteemed authors should never be forgotten, Crayon holds that most literature speaks only to its own time and will necessarily be forgotten. Only the work of a true poet can transcend its original time and place and find some relevance to posterity: "He is the faithful portrayer of nature, whose features are always the same, and always interesting."[32]

As in Eidlitz's T-Squares, the story and its moral lesson evolve through dialogue alone. And, just as important, that moral centers on professional issues: on how to achieve the best results in literature or architecture. Though Irving's sketch is far shorter than Eidlitz's series of essays, the essential themes are the same, focusing on the layers of misunderstanding that separate artists from their audiences and how the artist can best attempt to penetrate those layers and achieve a lasting art. Both are works of metafiction, using fiction and the falsity, even impossibility, of the dialogue within to heighten the reference to reality.[33]

Though books and their misuse figure prominently in Eidlitz's Dialogues, Eidlitz's story is told not by a book, of course, but by the two T-Squares. The choice of inanimate, inorganic objects to tell the stories of the two architects Brown and Pinch is initially the most amusing device he chose. Even the humble implements of the architect's trade were intimately aware of, and interested in, the major issues of the day (Figure 8).[34] The T-Square is a well-established public symbol for the architect. It has long been an important part of Masonic imagery and can also be an emblem of St. Thomas, who, after doubting the Resurrection, found redemption and embarked on an extensive church-building campaign in the Far East. Philadelphia architects formed the T-Square Club in 1883; the architectural critic George S. Chappell wrote his essays for the *New Yorker* in the 1920s and 1930s under the name "T-Square." The imagery persists into the present: in Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever" (1991), an architect's wife, upon discovering his

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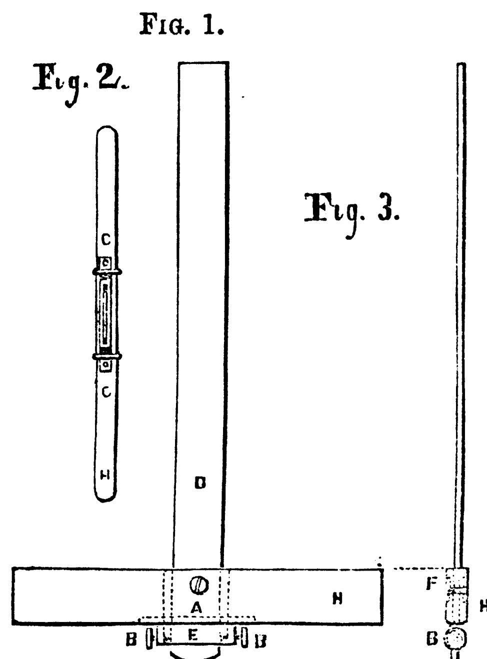
8. "Taggart's Improved T-Square," with a removable crossbar. A typical example of the myriad refinements of the humble T-Square that were promoted and patented in the nineteenth century. *Scientific American* (December 24, 1853).



infidelity, ends their relationship by throwing his T-square, a stand-in for the physical man, out the window. *Roberto, the Insect Architect* (2000), T-square in hand, delights children with his plucky determination to change the world, for the better, by making buildings (Figure 9).[35] For Eidlitz, the T-Square was the ideal device: it both resonated with the public and underscored his message about the importance of logic and practice as tools to combat the false learning provided by the shallow reading of books.

In keeping with his use of the T-Square as an instantly readable symbol, Eidlitz gave satirical names and quirky mannerisms to his characters, rendering them as extreme caricatures or stereotypes instantly recognizable to his readers. This was another common device in nineteenth-century American literature, with its sources in British fiction, well exemplified in Irving's early work *Salmagundi* and in the popular serializations of Charles Dickens beginning in the 1830s. *Salmagundi* was a collection of the "whim-whams and opinions of Launcelot Langstaff," populated with characters like William Wizard, a theater critic, and Anthony Evergreen, a gentleman estate owner. So when Eidlitz's characters like Jim Pointer, the honest stonecutter, and John Clearstuff, the honest carpenter, appear, his readers would have known instantly that their names were themselves illuminations of their characters. "Philologus" Brown thus talks too much, and "Cute" Green is very sharp with money. Architects would clearly have needed to be wary of a building committee composed of Brother Snodgrass, Brother Sly, and Brother Rash.

Eidlitz used a mix of Socratic and narrative dialogue to drive the essays. At times, the Linden and Steel T-Squares exchanged questions and answers, with the Linden T-Square imparting its wisdom to its "innocent friend" in small doses.[36] But through most of the Discourses, the Steel T-Square asks only one or two questions that allow the Linden T-Square to embark on long soliloquies ("Don't interrupt me!" it exclaims at one point) detailing stories from Tom Pinch's professional life. Didactic dialogue was commonly used in essays and fiction, often satirically pointing out the foibles of characters by having them speak for themselves in their own ridiculous ways. The quarto, in "The Mutability of Literature," undercuts its own position by speaking pompously and gratingly. In *The Crayon*, a dialogic exchange between an "Alarming Uncle" and a "Poor Artist" was "intended . . . to point to a moral rather than to adorn a tale."[37] The use of dialogue to tell moral stories avoided the "pleasures" of pure fiction by using a form more clearly rooted in educational tradition. This dual function is precisely what appealed to Eidlitz about using dialogue as the primary narrative tool in his fictions. On the one hand, it was a tool of literary fiction and of everyday communication. But on the other hand, it was not purely popular—it still had roots in didactic traditions of classical philosophy.

Conclusion: The Failure of Advocacy

Any reader remotely familiar with Eidlitz and his signed essays, which also appeared in *The Crayon* from 1858 to 1860, would surely by the final entry in the series have been able to guess its author. Eidlitz's public and scholarly essay "On Christian Architecture" contains the same analysis of the purpose and meaning of churches as Pinch's impassioned soliloquy to the church-building committee. His exegesis of the differences between classical and Gothic architecture echoes his paper "On Style," in which he demonstrates the impracticability of Greek and Roman forms for contemporary society and the universal flexibility of the Gothic. Pinch's impatience with church clients and their suspicion of Gothic forms is stated clearly in Eidlitz's acerbic commentary on the 1859 competition for the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher's Plymouth Church.[38]

The unresolved tension between the poles of Eidlitz's intentions and methods kept the Discourses from achieving the idealistic results he had hoped. Eidlitz chose a fictitious narrative but embedded his own personal stories within it. He chose the popular form of a dialogue but maintained its reference to antique philosophy as well. The literary devices are clumsily handled and, ironically, simply get in the way of Eidlitz's message: that architects and clients needed to find better ways of communicating. In the adoption of fiction, Eidlitz perhaps did not recognize that he was on infirm ground. He was not a writer, particularly not a writer of narrative fiction. While Eidlitz adopted the forms of popular literature neatly enough, it was in the narrative itself that he suffered. The first Dialogue starts the series off well, but by the end, Eidlitz is largely using the voice of the Linden T-Square simply to tell his own, personal story. In this attempt to unite fiction and professional and social criticism, he was unable to sustain wit and narrative throughout the critique. The sto-

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9. Frustrated in his attempts to find employment as an architect in mainstream firms, Roberto, T-Square held high, proclaims ''I'll show them all.'' Nina Laden, *Roberto the Insect Architect* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2000). (Courtesy Chronicle Books.)

ries meander, the satire is heavy handed, and the critiques become too harsh to be enjoyable as humor. He should perhaps have left literature to writers, just as he wished architecture to be left to architects.

But Eidlitz is not, of course, the only architect to fall prey to literary pretension in the pursuance of idealistic goals. Louis Sullivan's *Kindergarten Chats* also used Socratic dialogue and a narrative centered an inexperienced architect who grows and matures by listening to the stories and musings of a more experienced practitioner. Sullivan's *Chats* fell on similarly deaf ears, with their mannered and paternalistic tones failing to capture the general audience he, too, had hoped to gain.[39]

The problems that contemporary architects face today in searching for a general audience are, despite the abandonment of T-Squares for computers, strikingly similar. By professionalizing architecture and claiming specialized knowledge, architects have built a wall between themselves and their clients. Breaching that wall thus becomes a crucial aspect of the successful architect. The profession, however, has clearly reached no consensus on just how to breach that wall. The literary endeavors of the profession suffer from the same pitfalls that tarnished Eidltiz's well-intentioned Discourses. A magazine like *Dwell*, for example, that attempts to popularize high design, suffers from criticism both by architects and by consumers who find the magazine too popular and too pretentious, respectively. Postmodernism, rooted in the search for authenticity in popular, vernacular images of urbanism and built form, is widely considered to have been a failed attempt to link popular culture and the architectural discipline.[40] Books like *Learning from Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi, Steve Izenour, and Denise Scott Brown, which ostensibly drew on popular culture, also failed to breach the divide between the profession and the culture it somewhat anthropologically examined. Rather than reinventing architectural discourse with each new generation of the profession, a sense of continuity and learning from past successes and mistakes can inform a richer sense of what it means to communicate with the general public.

What united Eidlitz and Sullivan was the common need to attempt to abandon the usual forms of architectural dialogue in order to reach that broader public. Both Eidlitz and Sullivan had the same impulse: to educate the public, one needed to speak to them in ways to which they were accustomed. There was a deep sense, for both, that the more academic lectures they gave to their fellow architects did not resonate with potential clients or with the common man. The Discourses were, in contemporary terms, ''interdisciplinary'' and community service–oriented essays designed to humanize the esoteric world of architecture. Breaking out of professional discourse and adopting fiction, narrative, and dialogue served—and I would argue still serves—an important need to think differently and to speak differently to reach a new audience.

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Notes

1. "Blueprint for America Abstracts," http://www.aia150.com/SiteObjects/files/bl150_abstracts.pdf (accessed March 14, 2007).
2. Julie V. Iovine, "Architecture: 2005—A User's Manual," *New York Times* (January 6, 2005), F1.
3. For a discussion of another of Eidlitz's attempts to reform the profession and architectural education, see Kate Holliday, "'Build More and Draw Less': The AIA and Leopold Eidlitz's Grand Central School of Architecture," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65, n.3 (September 2006): 378–401.
4. James Early provides an overview of antebellum architectural writing in "American Architectural Writing in the Earlier Nineteenth Century," *JAE* 12 (1957): 23–25. The role of architectural writing in practice is also discussed throughout W. Barksdale Maynard, *Architecture in the United States, 1800–1850* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002).
5. The fullest treatment of the drive to professionalize architecture is Mary N. Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth Century America* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999). See also Henry Saylor, *The AIA's First Hundred Years* (Washington: Octagon, 1957) and, for a social sciences perspective, David Brain, "Practical Knowledge and Occupational Control: The Professionalization of Architecture in the United States," *Sociological Forum* 6 (1991): 239–68.
6. On Eidlitz, Kathryn E. Holliday, *Leopold Eidlitz: Architecture and Idealism in the Gilded Age* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2008) as well as the passages on Eidlitz in Robert A. M. Stern, Patrick Gilmartin, et al., *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999), pp. 18ff. Kenneth Jacobs, "Leopold Eidlitz: Becoming an American Architect" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2005) catalogs Eidlitz's buildings.
7. "L. Eidlitz then read a paper on 'Christian Architecture' as well as a humorous 'Discourse of Two T-Squares.' Upon motion of F. Peterson a double note of thanks was tendered this author of two papers." Minutes of the AIA, January 5, 1858. Eidlitz then read the second paper in the series at the next meeting: "L. Eidlitz read Mr Brown, second part of the two T-Squares. On the motion of Mr Cleaveland the thanks of this meeting were presented to Mr Eidlitz." Minutes of the AIA, January 19, 1858, AIA Archives, Washington, D.C. The surviving papers of the *Crayon*'s editor contain only brief notes between Richard Morris Hunt and John Durand and do not shed further light on the extension of Eidlitz's T-Squares series; John Durand Papers, Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library.
8. For a discussion of the journal, see *The Crayon and the American Landscape* (Montclair, NJ: Montclair Art Museum, 1993). Though it was a serious art journal, *The Crayon* did occasionally publish humorous pieces besides Eidlitz's "Discourses." The successful portrait painter Daniel Huntington, for example, submitted satirical letters signed by the character "Flake White." Wendy Greenhouse, "The Crayon's 'Flake White' Identified," *American Art Journal* 18 (1986): 77–78.
9. Leopold Eidlitz, "The T-Squares: No. 1—Philologus Brown," *Crayon* 5 (February 1858): 48.
10. Ibid., p. 50.
11. Eidlitz, "T-Squares: Philologus Brown (continued)," *Crayon* 5 (March 1858): 79.
12. Ibid., p. 77.
13. Eidlitz, "The T-Squares: Philologus Brown (concluded)," *Crayon* 5 (April 1858): 107.
14. Emerson wrote, "Whatever events in progress shall go to disgust men with cities, and infuse into them the passion for country life, and country pleasures, will render a service to the whole face of this continent, and will further the most poetic of all the occupations of real life, the bringing out by art the native but hidden graces of the landscape." Ralph Waldo Emerson, "The Young American" (1844), in *The Prose Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Boston, MA: Osgood, 1875), p. 200.
15. Horatio Greenough, "American Architecture," *United States Magazine and Democratic Review* 13 (August 1843): 206–210, reprinted in Greenough, *Form and Function: Remarks on Art, Design, and Architecture* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1966), p. 51.
16. Eidlitz, "The T-Squares: Mr. Gray, The Gentleman of Taste," *Crayon* 5 (July 1858): 198.
17. Ibid.
18. Eidlitz, "The T-Squares: Cute Green—The Building Committee (concluded)," *Crayon* 5 (December 1858): 347.
19. Ibid., p. 346.
20. Ibid., p. 348.
21. Elizabeth Moulton, *St. George's Church, New York* (New York: St. George's Church, 1964), p. 42.
22. Eidlitz, "The T-Squares: Cute Green—The Building Committee (concluded)," 349.
23. Mary Woods, in *From Craft to Profession*, p. 34, uses Eidlitz's dismissive attitude toward Philologus Brown as evidence that he was "far from progressive" and was hostile to builders. As I argue in this article, I believe that his position is nuanced and complex and that Eidlitz's use of irony makes it easy to misinterpret the pan-professional hierarchy he envisioned.
24. Eidlitz, "T-Squares: Philologus Brown (continued)," *Crayon* 5 (March 1858): 78, 79.
25. Eidlitz, "On Aesthetics," p. 89 and "On Aesthetics, II," p. 111.
26. Eidlitz, "On Aesthetics, II" p. 111.
27. For a discussion of the reception of Eidlitz's philosophy by his fellow AIA members in the 1850s and 1860s, see Holliday, *Leopold Eidlitz*, Chapter 4.
28. Washington Irving, William Irving, and James Kirke Paulding, *Salmagundi, or, The Whim-Whams and Opinions of Launcelot Langstaff, Esq. and Others*, reprinted (New York: Putnam, 1889), pp. 13–14.
29. Allison Byerly, "Effortless Art: The Sketch in Nineteenth-Century Painting and Literature," *Criticism* 41 (Summer 1999): 349–64. For a thorough discussion of popular fiction in nineteenth-century America and its relationship to "higher" forms of literature, see David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance: The Subversive Imagination in the Age of Emerson and Melville* (New York: Knopf, 1988).
30. Washington Irving, "The Mutability of Literature," in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and Other Stories, or The Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), p. 106.
31. Ibid., pp. 107–08.
32. Ibid., p. 114.
33. In this use of "metafiction," I use it in the sense defined by Patricia Waugh in *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1985), p. 6: "In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction."
34. For a brief account of the development of the T-Square, see Maya Hambly, *Drawing Instruments, 1580–1980* (London: Sotheby's, 1988), p. 113.
35. Nina Laden, *Roberto the Insect Architect* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2000).
36. Eidlitz, "The T-Squares: Cute Green—The Building Committee," 262. This particular essay in the series is the best example of a Socratic dialogue, with fairly rapid exchange of questions and answers.
37. Eidlitz, "The T-Squares: Cute Green—The Building Committee," 287.
38. Eidlitz, "[Plymouth Church]," *Crayon* 6 (1859): 150–51.
39. On the *Kindergarten Chats*, see in particular Narciso G. Menocal, *Architecture as Nature: The Transcendentalist Ideas of Louis Sullivan* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1981), pp. 86–93 and Robert Twombly, *Louis Sullivan: His Life and Work* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1986), pp. 372–76. Both conclude that Sullivan's abstruse, verbose *Chats* had none of the impact he had hoped.
40. The literature on the topic is, of course, copious, but see Reinhold Martin, "Architecture's Image Problem: Have We Ever Been Postmodern?" *Grey Room* 22 (Winter 2006): 6–29, for a recent reevaluation.

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