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Abstract

The market for populuxeprints in Sweden after 1800.

By Helena Strömquist Dal

During the first decades of the 19th century advertisements for books in Swedish newspapers and sales catalogues are quite abundant. One of the advertisers was the bookseller and bookbinder Erik Norman, who had a permanent bookstand at the marketplace, Stortorget in central Stockholm and a bookshop in a house next to the same square from 1819 to 1846.¹ Through the detailed descriptions Norman gives of the goods he is advertising we get a good picture of the growing book market during the first half of the 19th century. What strikes me at a first reading of Norman's sales catalogues are the detailed descriptions of the merchandise, the showy decoration and material qualities of the goods. Many of the things Norman is selling are not books but other forms of print, such as conversation cards, games, hand coloured pictures for cutting and playing and of course music. In this paper I will argue that an appropriate designation of this merchandise would be *populuxe*; that is relatively exclusive products intended for the common market.² Almanacs, handbooks, fiction and magazines especially for women and children were sold bound in decorated and expensive bindings and in boxes, they were printed on thick paper and often illustrated with engraved handcoloured plates. The production and selling of populuxe prints and other goods was an important force in the formation of a market for cultural consumption in the 19th century. Buying prints of all kinds became part of the consumption of the rising middle classes during the first decades of the 19th century. Normans and other booksellers' and publishers' advertising also shed light on how the reading culture transformed into a culture of pleasure and fashion were the material and aesthetic aspects of the prints played an essential role as a part of the consumption of the prints. The material and aesthetic qualities of the semi-luxurious printed merchandise had a transformational power of the identity of the consumer and the social statue of his or her class.³

¹ *Uti bokbindaren E. Normans bod, invid apotheket å Stortorget, samt i julmarkanden* [...] Stockholm 1824.

² Cissie Fairchild, "The production and marketing of populuxe goods in eighteenth-century Paris" in *Consumption and the world of goods*. Ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter, London & New York 1992. Thomas Hines *Populuxe*, New York 1986, p. 3.

³ Karin Wurst, *Fabricating pleasure, fashion, entertainment, and culture consumption in Germany 1780-1830*. Detroit 2005, p. 53.