

Jennifer Ohlund; Abstract, Material Cultures Conference. johlund@calstatela.edu

***Amo, Amas: Latin for the Middle Class***

The rise of print culture is bound up with the rise of vernacular-only literacy. The genres associated with print capital—the novel, spiritual autobiography, political pamphlet, periodical essay—are largely independent from the classical tradition, requiring no competency in Greek or Latin for either writer or reader. They were pitched, not to a learned patron, but to a wide consumership. For partisans of the Ancients, such as Pope and Swift, the classics provided not just an aesthetic ideal, but a bulwark against the commercialization of literature. Latinity stood against the hacks of the marketplace.

My paper traces the how this critique of commercial vernacular genres actually coincides with the increasing commercialization of Latin literacy. I explore such documents as J. Garretson's *English Exercises for Schoolboys to Translate into Latin*, which suggests the shifting demographic for Latin studies, testing competency with the subjunctive, for instance, with the phrase "If I can be a rich tradesman." More advanced exercises, amidst moral lessons that reprehend immodest women and praise schoolmasters (who should be loved second only to God), include sample dialogues between schoolboys, including a glover's son and a boy who boasts that he "knows where each commodity is placed" in his parents' shop. The yoking of Latin literacy and commodity culture is reinforced by the back matter of the *Exercises*, which contains advertisements for volumes calculated to delight the schoolboy's heart such as *New Essays on Trade* and *A Poor Man's Guide to Salvation*, alongside Juvenal, Virgil, Ovid and Sallust, a kind of Scriblerian nightmare of the indiscriminate mixing of high and low.

I examine the ways in which this capitalization of cultural capital both expands the opportunities for social advancement and contributes to the formation of "taste" as an important marker of social status.

Jennifer Ohlund; Abstract for Material Cultures Conference, 2010