

OSL Workshop: Cultural Branding

When/where: Utrecht, Friday 25 October (13.30-16.30); venue to be confirmed

Instructors: Dr Helleke van den Braber and Prof. Dr. Jos Joosten (Radboud University)

Organizer: Dr Jeroen Dera (Radboud University)

‘Brands prefigure our experience of products’, notes Michael Bhaskar in his study *The Content Machine. Towards a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to the Digital Network* (2013). Bhaskar’s words are in line with one of the central premises of marketing theory, which conceptualizes ‘brands’ as trademarks that identify a product and differentiate it from its competitors. In the field of literary studies, however, the process of branding has hitherto gained little academic discussion. Yet literary authors and the texts they produce are constantly ‘branded’: from the early modern period onwards, they have been both the object and the initiator of a complex marketing process.

This workshop, then, will provide analytical tools to study the branding of literature. Drawing on the work of – amongst others – Clayton Childress, Philippe Mihailovich and Karl Moore, literary branding is defined as an interactive process in which producers (e.g. authors, publishers, literary agents), distributors (e.g. book traders, librarians) and consumers (e.g. critics, teachers, readers) construe a set of regimented associations with an author, oeuvre or literary text. This set of associations can be analyzed as a dynamic and constantly metamorphosing narrative about the branded author or text. In the workshop, we will discuss and analyse aspects of the ‘sets of associations’ construed around national and international literary brands, with special emphasis on

1. the processes of inclusion and exclusion central to the branding process
2. the way these processes shape narratives about national literatures.

More details on readings and assignments will follow soon.