



Workshop: Cultural Branding

**Date: Friday 25 October | Time: 13.30-16.30 | Venue: Utrecht University, Drift 21 – 0.03 |
Instructors: Dr Helleke van den Braber and Prof. Dr. Jos Joosten (Radboud University)**

In the field of literary studies, 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.

Over the last few years, prof.dr. Jos Joosten and dr Helleke van den Braber have worked on an edited volume on historical and modern examples of branding processes in the literary field. The volume (now under review, due to be published in 2020 by the Amsterdam University Press) is the result of the collaborative work of 16 researchers and includes articles on branding in the contemporary literary field as well as in the fields of the 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. It’s interesting to note that neither the editors, nor the 16 authors involved may be termed as marketing or branding specialists per se - *Branding books across the ages*, as the volume is called, is, for them, an experimental attempt to newly conceptualize the branding aspects of literary history and of historical and contemporary processes of literary production, distribution and reception. In the workshop we will

- Outline the analytical tools the authors of this volume employed (or: tried to employ) to study the branding of literature
- Discuss the (practical and conceptual) opportunities and pitfalls of venturing, as a relative outsider, into the study of branding, marketing and the economics of literature – normally the domain of marketing specialists, cultural sociologists and cultural economists.

Assignment

While preparing the volume, Prof Joosten and dr Van den Braber have asked their authors to work from a specific (but conveniently broadly formulated) conception of cultural branding as we, in this volume, interpret and approach it. It reads as follows:

Writers, literary works, oeuvres, genres and movements (but also: cultural journals and publishing houses) can be seen as products that function and are valued in the literary field by means of (un)intentionally constructed 'identity myths'. As a brand, writers, literary works, etc., might therefore be regarded as "a set of



regimented associations" (Moore) that together form a story or, better yet, a collection of stories. Brands are, after all, a dynamic phenomenon: "For identity brands, success depends on how well the myth adjusts to historical exigencies (...)"(Holt 2006). And: "All brands need to keep moving, keep building their stories" (Mihailovich 2006). Hence, Schroeder (2014) underlines the importance of 'a focus on cultural processes that affect contemporary brands, including historical context, ethical concerns, and representative conventions.' Moreover, complex dynamics are specific to the interaction in the literary field between different actors (writers, literary agents, publishers, booksellers, critics, readers), all of whom can control and diversify the branding process.

In *Branding books across the ages* we assume that a brand is a promise on the value customers (and readers) will receive, and that all parties involved make various (and historically variable) contributions to building expectations about that promise - and to the possible redemption thereof. We see branding in the cultural field as a distinctly dynamic process, not only in a diachronic but also in a synchronic sense. In *Branding books across the ages* we address the interactive process whereby authors, publishers and the public collectively, over time, 'make' a brand of a writer, an oeuvre, a work or a genre. How that happens, with which means, via which interventions, via which processes, with which intentions, and with which outcome differs from case to (historical) case and is the central object of research in our work.

Please write an essay (750 words) in which you tentatively connect (a specific part of) this definition to either a *case study* or a *concept* related to your own research.

Required reading:

1. Clayton Childress, *Under the Cover. The Creation, Production, and Reception of a Novel*. Princeton, Princeton UP 2017, 1-13 and 127-150

And please select and read two out of the three following draft texts:

2. Unedited draft version of Gaston Franssen, 'Allegories of Branding: How to Successfully Fail Charles Bukowski', 1-30

3. Unedited draft version of Helleke van den Braber, 'Telling a double story: the branding of a cultural magazine 1904-1919', 1-14

4. Unedited draft version of Jack McMartin, 'This is what we share': Co-branding Dutch literature at the 2016 Frankfurt Book Fair, 1-15



Further reading:

Michael Bhaskar (2013), *The Content Machine. Towards a Theory of Publishing from the Printing Press to the Digital Network*. London/New York/Delhi, Anthem Press

Pierre Bourdieu (1993), 'The field of cultural production, or: the economic world reversed'. In: *The field of cultural production. Essays on art and literature*. Cambridge, Polity Press, 29-73

Pierre Bourdieu (1999), 'Une révolution conservatrice dans l'édition'. In: *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 126-127, 3-28

Douglas B. Holt (2006), *How brands become icons : the principles of cultural branding*, Harvard, Harvard UP

Jérôme Meizoz (2007), *Postures littéraires. Mises en scène modernes de l'auteur*. Essai. Genève, Slatkine.

Jérôme Meizoz (2010), 'Modern posterities of posture. Jean-Jacques Rousseau'. In: G.J. Dorleijn, R. Grüttemeier & L. Korthals Altes (red.), *Authorship revisited: conceptions of authorship around 1900 and 2000*. Leuven, Peeters, 81-93.

Philippe Mihailovich (2006), 'Kinship branding: A concept of holism and evolution for the nation brand'. In: *Place branding*, 2 (3), 229-247

Jonathan E. Schroeder (2014), *Brands: Interdisciplinary Perspectives*. London/New York, Routledge

Jonathan E. Schroeder (2009), 'The Cultural Codes of Branding'. In: *Marketing Theory* 9, 123-126

Claire Squires (2007), *Marketing literature. The making of contemporary writing in Britain*. London, Palgrave Macmillan

Craig J. Thompson, Aric Rindfleisch and Zeynep Arsel (2006), 'Emotional Branding and the Strategic Value of the Doppelgänger Brand Image'. In: *Journal of Marketing* 70 (1), 50-64