Branding Books Across the Ages

Strategies and Key Concepts in Literary Branding

Edited by
Helleke van den Braber, Jeroen Dera, Jos Joosten and Maarten Steenmeijer

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Introduction

Helleke van den Braber, Jeroen Dera, Jos Joosten, and Maarten Steenmeijer

'Brands prefigure our experiences of products.'
– Michael Bhaskar

Branding Books Across the Ages researches the process of branding writers, literary works, oeuvres, genres, publishers, and literary journals through the centuries. We take as our starting point the idea that, both in a contemporary context and historically, literature has been subject to branding. Moreover, it is assumed that this complex cultural process is determined by time-related factors in which a diverse range of actors (writers, agents, publishers, book traders, critics, readers) play a role. We ask under which conditions such literary branding takes place, whose interests are being served, and what the impact of this process – of 'turning something into a brand' – has on the creation and dissemination of literature. Via the sixteen case studies discussed in the chapters of this book, we examine the branding of Dutch literature in the Netherlands, the branding of Dutch literature abroad, and the branding of foreign literature in the Netherlands, from early modernity up to and including the present day. Whilst we demonstrate how writers themselves have consistently played a leading role in this process, the guiding role of publishers, book traders, critics, and the organizers of book fairs also becomes apparent. Throughout the centuries, the brands they have created (for themselves, their products, or literature as a whole) have been aimed towards their readers. Inevitably, our exploration of such processes also leads us towards an examination of the historical and the contemporary reader.

Below, we first explore the term and the concept of branding in the broadest sense, and subsequently define what we understand as branding within the literary domain in the context of this book. Proceeding, we

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present a theoretical framework based on the following three pairs of central concepts:

1 the balance between *economic* and *symbolic* interests, which is crucial to branding;
2 the equally crucial choice of either *auto-image* or *hetero-image*;
3 the complex negotiation between *resistance to* or *acceptance of* branding.

These three pairs of concepts, which will be discussed in greater detail shortly, structure all sixteen contributions.

The Concept of *Branding*

It was only in the seventeenth century that the term brand (originally meaning a piece of burning wood) came to refer to a practice that dates back millenia: marking or identifying goods. Thus, in the first instance, a brand was a means of registration, an identity mark. During the industrial revolution, the possibilities for (re)production and distribution increased as never before and, as a consequence, so did competition between producers. In a market that would become increasingly globalized and competitive, a growing need arose for companies to distinguish themselves from their competitors – especially those producing and marketing similar products. At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, companies such as Kellogg's and Coca-Cola developed branded products: products with recognizable symbols that clearly distinguished them from unbranded commodities. In this way, brands changed from simple *identity marks* into *trademarks*. In its most specific meaning, when understood as a *trademark*, a brand is a

> unique design, sign, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors. Over time, this image becomes associated with a level of credibility, quality, and satisfaction in the consumer's mind […]. Thus brands help harried consumers in [an otherwise] crowded and complex marketplace, by standing for certain benefits and value.[1]

Brands can be created for various reasons (e.g. Mihailovich 2006). First of all, of course, commercial motives play a role: maximizing the sale of a product, or the trading value of a company. However, brands can also serve 'altruistic goals', such as (environmental) sustainability and humanitarian aid. In such cases, gaining economic capital is not the goal, but the means to an end. Yet, in both cases – and thus, this is also the case when gaining economic capital is the ultimate aim – gaining symbolic capital is crucial in order to realize the intended goals. After all, a *brand* is not a product in its own right, but rather is a sign or, even more concretely, an icon that embodies an identity myth. For example, the Apple brand stands for modernity, imagination, freedom, and individuality: someone who wears Nike shoes conquers their inner slacker; and drinking Coca-Cola with others creates happiness. According to Jennifer L. Aaker (1997), analogous with the *Big Five* from psychology, the characteristics of a brand's personality ('the set of human characteristics associated with a brand' (Aaker 1997: 347)) can be condensed into the following five core dimensions: *sincerity*, *excitement*, *competence*, *sophistication,* and *ruggedness*. However, Aaker also notes that, whilst 'the human personality dimensions remain robust across cultures […], the same may not be so for brand personality', and hence the 'brand personality scale' she proposes 'might not be appropriate for measuring brand personality in a different cultural context' (Aaker 1997: 355).

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[1] http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/brand.html [accessed 8 October 2019].

Initially, we might only associate brands with large companies such as Apple, Nike, and Coca-Cola. The brands of such companies and their products are especially makeable, whereas their products are essentially endlessly reproducible, and as products (based on the 'product-related attributes' that relate to their 'pure' usage functions) they do not necessarily have to differ from similar products by a different brand. However, within the domains to which the phenomenon of branding has been extended during recent decades – for example, cities, regions, and even entire countries – this is more complicated. Today, much time, effort, and money is invested in *nation* and *city branding* with an eye on specific commercial and symbolic functions, interests, and goals (e.g. the substantial increase of certain economic activities, such as tourism; attracting (mega-)events such as the Olympic Games; large-scale architectural projects). As a result of these differences, the process of place branding differs from those related to companies and their products:

> Rather than a top-down authoritarian structure, the best model for implementing a nation brand is probably something closer to Al Qaeda than Josef Stalin: a loose network of semi-independent groups, each planning and carrying out its own activities and communications which are inspired by a commonly held belief in some simple, powerful mission. (Anholt 2005: 226)

Finally, *personal branding* must also be mentioned here. We live in a world in which it is increasingly important to brand oneself correctly if one is to gain employment, gain funding, or secure a project.

Branding in/and Literature

Writers, literary works, oeuvres, genres, publishers, movements, and trends can also be conceived of as products that function in a certain way and gain meaning within the literary field via 'identity myths', which are (at least initially) intentionally constructed for this purpose. In a broader context, this may be compared to the idea of national literature as the brand of the nation state. As brands, writers, literary works, and so on could thus be considered signs with 'a set of regimented associations' (Moore 2003: 339) that together constitute a story or, even better, a collection of stories. After all, brands are always subject to transformation: 'For identity brands, success depends on how well the brand's myth adjusts to historical exigencies' (Holt 2004: 38). 'All brands need to keep moving, keep building their stories' (Mihailovich 2006: 232). This is why Schroeder (2009: 123) emphasises the importance of 'a focus on *cultural processes* that affect contemporary brands, including historical context, ethical concerns, and representational conventions'. Additionally, the dynamic of the complex interplay between different actors (writers, literary agents, publishers, book traders, critics, and readers) is specific to the literary field, each capable of directing and diversifying the process of branding.

In his interesting study *Under the Cover: The Creation, Production, and Reception of a Novel,* the cultural economist Clayton Childress (2017) discusses the structure of the process of branding within literature. For him, branding is one of the most important driving forces behind the movement of texts across fields. For him, branding comes down to the 'telling of a story' about a particular text. Both the content and the tone of that story depend on the interests and goals of the writers, agents, editors, book traders, reviewers, and readers who tell it. In every field (creation, production, reception), a different story is told about the text, and it is the development and transformation of this narrative that pushes the text from field to field. For Childress, branding thus not only occurs during the final stage of the route, when a text enters the market and has to reach a readership: rather, he emphasises the idea that processes of branding play a crucial role at every stage of the route. On the way, he argues, many conflicts occur between what one actor has to say about a particular text (how he or she wants to brand the text), and the visions of other stakeholders (Childress 2017).

In each of the three fields – creation, production, and reception – a story is told about what makes a text interesting or important in the eyes of the actors who are working on it during that particular stage. They have an interest in 'branding', 'pitching', or recommending the text, both for themselves and for each other, in the hope that this improves the text's chances along its long route from field to field. In the chapter by Helleke van den Braber, we see how this process of 'telling stories' played a role in the branding of the early-twentieth-century Dutch journal *De Beweging* (The Movement). She demonstrates how the stories that editor Albert Verwey told his readers and publishers about the importance of the journal collided – with various degrees of productivity – with the stories that those readers and publishers wanted to hear, or wanted to tell themselves. In this respect, the case study of *De Beweging* dovetails neatly with Childress' argument that within every field a different story is told about the text.

Childress (2017) primarily points towards the breaking points that emerge at the boundaries between fields. Every field has its own (professional) language, he argues, and the 'translation process' can lead to myriad conflicts and miscommunications. Not all actors are prepared or able to speak each other's language, and the story that is told about the text or oeuvre in question over time often bears these marks. In his chapter, Gaston Franssen demonstrates how this works by researching how a miscommunication between (the persona of) the writer and the reader can be a driving force behind successful branding in relation to the authorship of Charles Bukowski. Bukowski's success as a writer primarily depended upon his image as an antisocial outlaw – a persona that increasingly came under pressure as his work became more visible. This has led to an interesting paradox in which the success of Bukowski's branding, as Franssen argues, 'belies the values that readers have come to associate with the author'.

Childress (2017) points out that, within the field of production, it is primarily the authors themselves who brand their stories, their primary aim being to bring their work, their oeuvre, or their writer's persona to the attention of agents and other intermediaries. For example, they can point towards the autobiographical background of their story, or towards a special creation narrative. When the text subsequently moves towards the next field (production), this story, which has been embraced in the initial phase, often takes on a different hue. Publishers and marketing departments each have their own ideas about what makes a text interesting or 'marketable'. This often leads them to abandon the author's or the agent's story, replacing it with a new one – often the story publishers may want to tell about the plot, characters, and the extent to which this text can be compared to texts by other (usually more renowned) authors.

For the authors, it is sometimes hard to accept this transformation. They have to allow their book, their oeuvre, or their writer's persona to be marketed based on arguments that differ from those they had originally envisioned. For their part, publishers sometimes have difficulty dealing with the fact that the language marketing departments (in the third and final field) use to pitch the book to reviewers can differ significantly from the arguments the publishers used – both internally and externally – to justify their publishing decisions. Reviewers have different expectations and employ different selection criteria from the general readership, and hence marketers offer them a different (branding) story about the novel to the one the in-house editors themselves might employ. For example, the branding story that is aimed at reviewers often highlights the reception of earlier texts by the same author, rather than aspects related to the plot or the characters.

Thus, with every transition from one field to another, there is a necessary and intentional 'making and remaking' of the branding of a given text. Those who 'throw' a story in one field just have to wait and see what those who 'catch' it in another field will do with the story they have created. However, at the same time, a continuous interaction between actors and fields does take place. In the best-case scenario, a 'shared language' emerges from this interaction in which all stakeholders can recognise themselves. However, following Childress (as well as Van den Braber and Franssen in the context of this volume), this is not always successful, and often disagreements between authors, publishers, and readers or reviewers about what a given text, oeuvre, or author 'is' or 'means', or what makes it saleable or interesting, originate within these branding transitions. Notwithstanding these conflicts, such disagreements and transitions constitute wonderful research material (either in their own right or for historical comparison) for scholars of literature who are interested in the 'how' and the 'why' of literary branding.

In *Marketing Literature: The Making of Contemporary Writing in Britain* (2007), professor of publishing studies Claire Squires points out the unstable, uncertain moments when a text travels from agent to publisher, and from publisher to the marketing department. She considers the moment at which a cover is designed, a genre category is determined, and the 'blurb' on the back face is written, to be *the* moment of 'authorial anxiety' – the moment when authors lose control of the publishing and branding process. The text is reinterpreted in a way they had not necessarily intended. From that moment onwards, their own vision of the genre, meaning, and importance of the text is subordinated to the opinion of those marketing the work. The chapter written by Lieke van Deinsen and Nina Geerdink demonstrates the long history of this anxiety through examples of early modern authors who lost control over their own brands. They demonstrate that already at that time, conflicts between the various parties involved in the branding of authorship occurred, offering striking examples of authors who did not accept the decisions that were taken for them. The authors' resistance is understandable: even then, the audience was not always sympathetic to such disconnects between the ways in which an author branded him- or herself and the ways in which they were branded by publishers.

In *Branding Books Across the Ages,* we assume that, in the words of Tom Peters (1997), 'a brand is a promise on the value you'll receive'. All parties involved contribute to the accumulation of expectations regarding that promise and its possible fulfilment in various (and historically variable) ways. We thus consider branding in the literary field as a *process*, not only in a diachronic but also in a synchronic sense. In *Branding Books Across the Ages,* we describe the interactive process in which authors, publishers, and readerships over time 'make a brand' of an author, a work, or a genre. *How* this happens, via which means and interventions, according to which processes, with which intensions, and with which results, differs for each case study.

We aim to research all stages in this process, both in the present and in the past, paying special attention to the dynamic between the three most important participants: author, publisher, and readership. We ask to what extent this entire process is intentional. Often, the publisher is the initiator of the branding process, whereas the author is the one who is being made into a brand, and the readership is the target group considered to be sensitive towards that branding, yet these roles are unstable. In the course of the process, they can be turned around and shifted in various ways and for various reasons. These transformations too, in the form of *agency* within the process of branding, deserve our attention.

Despite the diachronic approach of *Branding Books Across the Ages,* an emphasis is placed on case studies from the twenty-first century. However, this is not merely coincidental. During recent decades, the literary world has become increasingly commercial and international (Sapiro 2018). Additionally, the growth of digital technology has fundamentally changed the possibilities of connecting with (and branding for) a particular readership. At the same time, the expectations and needs of the readership are fully in transition. Today, buyers of books seem just as interested in (actively) experiencing literature as they are in (passively) reading it, and this places new

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demands upon branding strategies. Whilst this is true for both emerging and established authors, it also applies to publishers, retailers, and marketeers. Therefore, the branding of writers and texts seems more intensive than ever. One of the questions posed in this book is the extent to which this impression is indeed correct, and in which ways and to what extent previous models and strategies of branding have precipitated and heralded those we see today. Whilst *Branding Books Across the Ages* arguably does not contain enough historical case studies to reach any definitive statements as to the continuities and discontinuities in the history of literary branding, they are numerous enough to indeed suggest such a hypothesis. In what follows, we will first discuss the aforementioned three pairs of concepts, which are woven through, and guide, subsequent chapters.

Economic versus Symbolic Interests

When approached from the perspective of institutional sociology – or, more concretely, from Pierre Bourdieu's (1993a) theory of *reversed economy* – it becomes clear that branding is a complicated process. First of all, Bourdieu assumes that *economic* capital and *symbolic* capital are diametrically opposed. In short, the first (which can be expressed in money) exists in an oppositional and unilateral relation to the second (prestige, literary renown). In his classic article 'The Production of Belief', originally published in 1983 (and later adapted for, and included in, his magnum opus *Les règles de l'art* from 1992), Bourdieu thematizes this conflict between economic and symbolic capital, arguing that within the field of literature, economic principles are disavowed:

> The challenge which economies based on the disavowal of the 'economic' present to all forms of economism lies precisely in the fact that they function, and can function, in practice – and not merely in the agents' representations – only by virtue of a constant, collective repression of narrowly 'economic' interest and of the real nature of the practices revealed by 'economic' analysis. (Bourdieu 1993b: 74)

Clearly, this poses an inevitable problem to literary publishers who, on the one hand, derive their status and raison d'être from their symbolic capital, yet on the other hand, from a business perspective, cannot escape basic economic demands (such as paying the printer, designer, or their sales department), and are thus always forced to take economic concerns into account. More concretely: they have to make sure their books are being sold. With regard to this problem, Bourdieu makes a clear division, in the first instance, between two types of publishing. Economic gain and (artistic) prestige seem mutually exclusive, and manifest themselves in two different cycles:

> on the one hand, [there is] a short production cycle, based on the concern to minimize risks by adjusting in advance to the identifiable demand and provided with marketing circuits and presentational devices (eye-catching dustjackets, advertising, public relations, etc.) intended to ensure a rapid return of profits through rapid circulation of products with built-in obsolescence. On the other hand, there is a long production cycle, based on acceptance of the risk inherent in cultural investments and above all on submission to the specific laws of the art trade. Having no market in the present, this entirely future-oriented production presupposes high-risk investments tending to build up stocks of products which may either relapse into the status of material objects (valued as such, by the weight of paper) or rise to the status of cultural objects endowed with an economic value incommensurate with the value of the material components which go into producing them. (Bourdieu 1993b: 79)

It seems evident that the short production cycle, with its commercial logic, is intrinsic to branding as the 'putting on the market' of a writer as a product, via the related marketing strategies. However, in reality, this is more nuanced. Similarly, branding in Bourdieu initially seems irreconcilable with the practice of the publisher who strives towards optimal literary prestige and in any case, publicity strategies cannot be made too explicit: 'the law of this universe whereby the less visible the investment, the more productive it is symbolically, means that promotion exercises, which in the business world take the overt form of publicity, must here be euphemized.' (Bourdieu 1993b: 77)

Yet the disavowal of 'economy' does not lead to a complete division between both forms of capital. Bourdieu acknowledges the fact that publishers who primarily aim to gain symbolic capital do (and indeed must) also gain economic capital. He notes this almost casually when he speaks of those publishers who 'derive a sometimes very substantial economic profit from the cultural capital which they originally accumulated through strategies based on denial of the "economy"' (Bourdieu 1993b: 102). In addition, whilst the *short production cycle* makes use of 'advertising' and 'public relations', so, too, does the publisher with prestige who assumes a long production cycle. The only difference is that (what one could call) the 'branding' of the latter publisher takes place in a different way, 'deriving a strategic advantage from its refusal to use the lower forms of public relations' (Bourdieu 1993b: 99). The disavowal of economic logic and the accompanying commercial mechanisms become its brand; its adjusted mechanisms to assure itself of a position within the field.

> The strategies which he [the publisher] applies in his relations with the press are perfectly adapted (without necessarily having been so conceived) to the objective demands of the most advanced fraction of the field, i.e. to the 'intellectual' ideal of negation, which demands refusal of temporal compromises and tends to establish a negative correlation between success and true artistic value. (Bourdieu 1993b: 100)

At the time Bourdieu wrote this text, he still made a rather stark division between the two systems. Fifteen years later, he published an article with the telling title 'A conservative revolution in publishing', in which he described how a new generation of publishers unproblematically and openly deployed both the short and the long production cycles:

> Certain publishers new to the game may try to reconcile strategies that would be irreconcilable if the literary field were more autonomous: those geared toward a long-term investment in writers promising long and productive careers, and those geared toward more immediately profitable literary production over the short term. They are supported in this ambition by a type of modernized marketing based on the methodical use of the *allodoxia*. (Bourdieu 2008: 142)

In the final years of his life, Bourdieu increasingly forwent his stance of analytical distance, more openly positioning himself in favour of the autonomy of the writer/artist. In his eyes, the development described in the quote above (which also made use of 'modernized marketing') was most questionable. Jos Joosten's chapter on the development of the work of the bestselling Dutch author Kluun demonstrates that this relation is still highly relevant. With Kluun, we see how the process of creating the brand 'Kluun' in the course of his first novel became the theme of his latest novel, *DJ*.

Nevertheless, we cannot help but note that, even in Bourdieu's earlier work, the workings of marketing mechanisms were already evident. After all, the explicit, public disavowal of the importance of economic capital

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contributes to the gaining of symbolic capital – and thus ultimately, in the long term, to economic efficiency. Consequently, perhaps it is useful – at an institutional level and in parallel with Bourdieu's original division – to differentiate between 'economic branding' and 'symbolic branding', the first being an instrument of economic efficiency in the short term, and the second geared towards gaining symbolic capital.

Linda Ackermans' case study concerning *Young Adult Literature* also demonstrates the complexity of the relation between symbolic and economic capital. On the one hand, questions of symbolic prestige (e.g. encouraging the young to read and cultivating a rudimentary literary awareness) obviously play a role in the discourse surrounding this new genre. On the other hand, this is clearly also a market of great economic interest. Maaike Koffeman's chapter shows a different side of the relation between the symbolic and the economic, demonstrating that, in the Dutch marketplace at least, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* emerged simultaneously as a commercially interesting mass product *and* a high-cultural classic with symbolic prestige.

Persona versus Self-Image

As mentioned previously, a brand is always an interplay between producers, distributers, and consumers within a specific context – in this case, the literary market. Yet it is precisely this interplay that makes it especially difficult to analytically define the concept of branding. If understood primarily as a process in which products, distributers, and consumers constitute a chain in which a story is formed about a product (i.e. a book or an author), the story in question comes to be perceived as a tangle that necessarily needs to be *untangled* in order to determine which actors contributed to the story at which point in time, and based on which ideas and/or with which motives.

A crucial question in this context is with which goal the story of a given brand is being told. As Laurens Ham demonstrates in his chapter on the branding of Dutch literature at the *Beijing Book Fair* in 2011, this question can be approached from a political perspective. Ham shows how the story of Dutch literature is permeated with national stereotypes concerning tolerance and the 'open mind' of the Dutch citizen. Conversely, branding scholar Philippe Mihailovich (2006: 229) thinks from the perspective of a market with its own related economic terminology: brands can be created for commercial reasons ('to be sold', 'to increase in value on the stock market') or can serve 'altruistic goals' – albeit ones that cannot be considered outside

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of the market context ('sustainable, long-term employment and prosperity'). Yet, as mentioned previously, within the literary field, in addition to economic capital (money), symbolic capital also plays a constitutive role. Thus, the intentional branding of books and especially authors is not always self-evident. Therefore, there are many writers (as will be explored in more detail in the subsection discussing the dual concepts of 'resistance' and 'acceptance') who disagree with the story that marketing departments tell about them, and who aim to maintain control over their own persona as authors.

Even for marketing scientists like Mihailovich, unravelling a brand's complexity is a difficult task. Whatever is being branded, there is always an interaction with the public, which plays a constitutive role in the formation of any given brand. For example, the chocolate brand Milka and their purple fields only reach their goal when the public makes the connection between Milka and 'purple', and in their turn start telling the story. In the same way, Michel Houellebecq is only an *enfant terrible* if not only his publisher, but also his critics and readers associate him with this archetype.

Yet there are some pronounced differences between brands such as Milka or Coca-Cola and literary brands. As mentioned previously, Milka's basic story, for example, is the same for every chocolate bar, and its branding is aimed towards making consumers buy as many of those bars as possible. Conversely, the buyers of *Particules élémentaires* will generally only buy a single copy of the novel. More complicated still is the influence of the object of literary branding itself, especially from an analytical perspective. Whilst a Coca-Cola advertisement tells a story about Coca-Cola as a brand, the branded bottle itself does not make its own contribution to that story. However, where the branding of authors is concerned, clearly this is a different story altogether. Whereas a brand such as Coca Cola can be considered as a research object that is being branded, as a research object, a literary author is both branded by other actors within the literary field (publisher, critique, book shop, education, societies, etc.), and also makes his or her own active contribution to that branding – unless, of course, it concerns posthumous branding, a complex process that is explored in Gwennie Debergh's chapter on Hugo Claus.

Because the process of branding is characterized by this tension between passivity and activity, research into literary branding introduces the analytical dual concepts of 'self-image' and 'persona'. The work of the Swiss literary sociologist Jérôme Meizoz offers a theoretical tool to further explore this pair of concepts. The central concept in Meizoz' thinking is 'posture';

a concept that he at closer inspection utilises inconsequently. In his book *Postures littéraires*, he defines the concept as follows:

> La 'posture' est la manière singulière d'occuper une 'position' dans le champ littéraire. Connaissant celle-ci, on peut décrire comment une 'posture' la rejoue ou la déjoue. Qui fait imprimer un ouvrage (un disque, une gravure, etc.) impose une image de soi qui dépasse les coordonnées d'identité du citoyen. (Meizoz 2007: 18)

The concept of 'posture' points towards the unique way in which actors within the literary field consolidate their position (in which *occuper* can mean both 'occupying' and 'conquering'). In this way they not only mark their own unique position, but also differentiate themselves as 'authors', as opposed to citizens who do not play a role in the literary field. Crucial to this definition is the idea that the authors create an 'image de soi'. This explicitly concerns a self-image, to which other actors within the field do not make any defining contributions.

In his later work, Meizoz seems to add more precise nuance to this idea. For example, in 2010, he writes the following about posture in his first analysis written in English: 'Posture is not uniquely an author's own construction, but an interactive process: the image is co-constructed by the author and various mediators (journalists, criticism, biographies) serving the reading public' (Meizoz 2010: 84). Thus, it is no longer about a singular image that the author creates on his or her own account, but about a co-construction to which other institutions within the field also contribute. With this 'overarching' definition of the concept of posture, Meizoz also touches upon the question of branding. Like a brand can be considered a sign with a 'set of regimented associations' – as Moore (2003: 339) called it – posture can also leave a strong mark on the way in which a given readership perceives an author.

Meizoz' theory on posture is clearly a work in progress, and this is partly why he gives different definitions of his own concept in different contexts. This forces researchers to operationalize very narrowly what they understand as 'posture'. On a methodological level, it is highly questionable whether posture concerns purely a construction by the author, or if it concerns a co-construction between the author and others. In the first case, posture can be seen as a form of auto-presentation, whilst in the second, both auto- and hetero-presentation are part of an author's posture. In order to avoid this vagueness of terminology, and because authors can react to their hetero-presentation through auto-presentation, we propose to conceptually differentiate between these two terms. Therefore, we understand 'posture' as referring to self-representations by the author, whilst we refer to representations by others (critics, teachers, publishers, marketers, other authors, journalists, radio and television commentators) with the term 'persona' (cf. the work of Ruth Amossy). In practice, the concepts of posture and imago exist in a mutual interaction, because authors can react (with varying degrees of success) to their persona via their posture. This is especially true for 'domestic authors', as opposed to 'foreign authors', as Maarten Steenmeijer argues in his chapter on the Dutch cover of Carlos Ruiz Zafón's bestseller *The Shadow of the Wind*, which he analyses as a brand for the covers of the Dutch translations of novels by other Spanish authors.

The difference between posture (one's self-image) and persona (one's image in the eyes of others) is especially helpful in research into literary branding because it allows us to analyse the specific contribution of a branded author to the story that is being told. The case studies in this book demonstrate the following three scenarios when this form of agency is concerned. First of all, it is possible that an author is merely the object of branding, in which case the author's image thus consists of a persona only. This is revealed in the chapter by Paul Hulsenboom, in which he demonstrates how a specific persona of the Polish king and letter writer Jan III Sobieski was created as a direct result of the prevailing Dutch translation style of the early nineteenth century. In the second scenario, the publisher takes the initiative in creating a brand, whilst the author plays a facilitating role. For example, Roel Smeets' chapter on the publisher Das Mag and its author Lize Spit illustrates how Spit primarily supports the story that the publisher wants to tell about itself, thus grafting her own posture on that of her publisher. Last, the initiative for an author's brand can also explicitly lie with the author – the third scenario, in which the author explicitly turns him- or herself into a brand, carefully monitoring his or her own public persona. This becomes evident, for example, in Jeroen Dera's chapter on Ellen Deckwitz, who presents a consistent story about her role as an ambassador of poetry via her self-presentation.

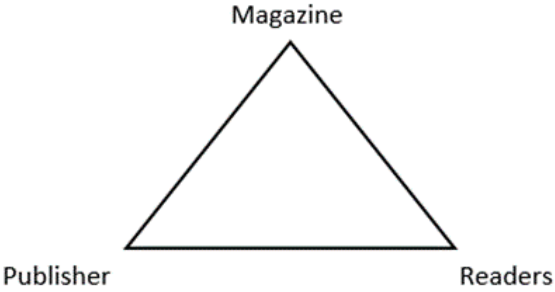
Meanwhile, Meizoz's thinking about 'posture' offers another productive framework with which to approach branding. Meizoz considers literary authors in terms of their uniqueness. Within the boundaries of the literary field, authors aim to establish an image of themselves that is as unique as possible – a trademark. The process of branding can confirm the author's singular self-image (which leads to an effective 'posture', according to Meizoz), but it is equally possible that the author's persona (as branded by other actors) conflicts with this singular self-image. The link with the dual concepts 'resistance' and 'acceptance' is thus easily made.

Resistance versus Acceptance

The third pair of concepts we utilise in this book foregrounds forms of *contested* branding, based on the assumption that authors can accept, embrace, or strengthen the brand their work is being made into, but can also express resistance towards it. They can collaborate with others in the process of branding (publisher and readership), but they can also oppose and resist them. In that case, they will try to undermine, adjust, or overthrow their brand in every possible way. Such resistance can be either implicit or explicit, stay behind closed doors, or be played out in the media. In this instance, the readership also has agency, either finding a brand believable and taking it seriously, or considering it unbelievable or ‘farfetched’.

Concerning the relationship between the brand and the public, Linda Ackermans’s chapter demonstrates just how precarious the connection between the two can be. She researches the strategies with which publishers of Young Adult literature try to convince a young readership of the credibility and attractiveness of the genre. Finding a convincing way to connect with their life worlds turns out to be a challenging task. In his chapter, Roel Smeets points out that the publisher Das Mag seeks precisely this sort of controversy by opposing competing publishers. This young publisher energises the Das Mag brand via the provocative (because not necessarily realistic) claim that it does business in a completely different way to more established companies. The fact that this message (and hence the brand) was immediately contested, put the publisher on the map. The Dutch writer Kluun also saw the potential in controversy and thus, in his chapter, Jos Joosten argues that writers such as Kluun navigate between *complicity* on the one hand, and distinction within the field on the other. As Joosten shows, Kluun established his brand by operating predictably and in accordance with the rules of the field on the one hand, whilst provocatively opposing them on the other. The fact that this double strategy led to a widespread rejection of his brand (and the kind of authorship he tried to project) was all simply part of the strategy.

These are examples of processes of resistance and acceptance that have until now hardly been mapped, and theorization in this field remains largely absent. Contested branding can perhaps best be researched by studying the tensions in the relationships between makers and other participants in cultural life. The art world perspective of Howard Becker (1982) offers several interesting insights not only into the modern period, but also in a historical context. Clayton Childress (2017) and Claire Squires (2007) researched modern forms of marketing in the publishing business. Whilst



their institutional analyses are directed towards contemporary process of branding, they can also help to understand the more historical disagreements (whether deliberate or not) between the three stakeholders in the branding process.

These are the three basic participants found in every form of literary branding – both historical and contemporary. Publisher, author, and readership each play a role, either as initiator, object, or recipient of the branding process. Because branding is an interactive process, these roles are inherently unstable, and the relations between the different actors in this process are in a state of constant transformation. The exchange between writer, publisher, and readership differs, not only for each (historical) period, but also for each (national) field, and for each case study. Finally, on the level of individual case studies, the nature of their interaction differs for each stage in the writing, publishing, and reception process. The extent to which the branding visions and intentions of these three stakeholders converge, is equally changeable and unstable.

Those who want to research the how and why of this instability may look towards the aforementioned work of Clayton Childress. In his *Under the Cover: The Creation, Production, and Reception of a Novel* (2017), Childress envisions a perspective other than the triangle presented above. Rather, he describes it as part of a long, linear *route*, arguing that each literary text that travels this route, visits three fields. He discerns the following steps: first, the text travels from author to agent (both actors operate in what Childress calls the 'the field of creation'), and subsequently moves to the publicity department via the publisher (who both operate within 'the field of production'). The text then travels to the reader or to the reviewer via the book seller (active within 'the field of reception'). It is not difficult to make Childress's perspective on 'branding as a route' productive for earlier historical periods, in which journals and newspapers, for example, inspired authors in 'the field of creation' to produce feuilletons, and printers (rather than publishers) took care of the dissemination of texts within the field of production. The basic idea of a linear route still holds true in these contexts. However, Childress's use of the term 'field' can also be confusing, as in his work the term seems to refer to the simple domains of production, distribution, and reception, rather than to the more complex idea of a field as a 'space of positions and position-takings', as espoused by Pierre Bourdieu (1993a: 30).

Like Squires and Childress, the sociologist Howard Becker (1982) studies the structure of the cultural field in his work *Art Worlds,* although providing a more systematic and a-historical perspective than the aforementioned authors. He also pays detailed attention to the processes of collaboration within the art worlds he describes. According to Becker, makers, disseminators, and recipients of art contribute to smoothly functioning art worlds, combining their efforts to '[produce] the kind of art works that art world is noted for' (Becker 1982: x). This collaboration is partly organized via a system of (unspoken) guiding conventions. Becker refers to those actors who are familiarized, and operate in accordance, with such conventions as 'integrated professionals' – people who know what kind of work will most easily find an audience amongst those interested in that type of art, and which approach can cause that specific art world to function most efficiently. A shared tradition of problems and solutions makes it easier to establish workable conventions and habits, as well as to cope with tensions and change. *Integrated professionals* (which, in the literary world, can be the authors themselves, but also publishers, marketers, reviewers, or intermediaries) will not consciously choose a course of action that will endanger the status quo of that particular world, or oppose accepted ways of working. Whilst the art they promote does not have to be safe or predictable, their ways of making, disseminating, and receiving definitely are. Integrated professionals, Becker argues, are not easily tempted to consciously oppose conventions or conceptions, or force a break with the ways in which a readership perceives a text, an author, or an oeuvre. They have an interest in (re)presenting the activities within their particular arts world as the result of a well-oiled machine. In other words, we cannot expect any forms of contested branding to result from their actions.

This is different for those actors who Becker (1982) refers to as 'mavericks' (an interesting detail here being that, as a figure of speech, 'maverick' is derived from the name of a quirky nineteenth-century American livestock farmer who refused to brand his cattle). Every field of art has its mavericks. Often, mavericks start out as integrated professionals, after which they distance themselves from the usual or accepted course of action having grown

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discontented with established practice, their own role in it, or the position of their work. Precisely because they are well aware of the rules of the game, these dissidents also know how to oppose them. Often, they consciously push boundaries to strengthen or emphasise their position through their resistance. In this way, they claim attention and recognition they would otherwise not receive. Mavericks enjoy creating tension and do not hesitate to make or exhibit this friction publicly. Sometimes their resistance is subtle, and sometimes it is radical in nature. They willingly oppose implicit artistic and organizational conventions, for example by making them explicit, questioning them, rejecting them, or ignoring them. When mavericks enjoy a strong position or a prominent reputation, such acts of resistance forces art worlds to somehow justify their established choices and defend 'how things are done'. The chapter by Roel Smeets demonstrates how Das Mag consciously assumed the maverick position and indeed managed to raise these kinds of questions within the field. As we will see in Gaston Franssen's chapter, the writer Charles Bukowski both benefited and suffered from his branding as a maverick. It seems logical to link the idea of contested branding to the role of mavericks in the art world. Yet whether writers who resist their brand are also recalcitrant in different domains is an interesting question. In addition, it remains questionable whether such displays of public resistance are always authentic, or whether they can also be (at least partly) seen as stunts. Furthermore, it is also open to question under which conditions internal unrest (directed towards the publisher or editor) remains behind closed doors or, conversely, finds its way into the outside world.

Writers are not the only ones who sometimes resist brands; readers can also resist new or existing stories about who or what a given writer, text, or oeuvre 'is', or should 'mean'. In marketing science, much has been written about consumers who turn against brands. Following Childress's argument that the branding of literature is a process in which actors tell and re-tell *stories about texts*, it is interesting to look at existing research into the (lack of) success of brands that practice so-called 'emotional branding'.

Craig J. Thompson, Aric Rindfleisch and Zeynep Arsel (2006) argue that emotional branding is a way to involve consumers in a brand by telling stories 'that demonstrate a genuine understanding of consumers' lifestyles, dreams, and goals' (50). Such 'story-driven' emotional branding is directed towards optimal resonance, and is more successful than other forms of marketing in engaging and affecting consumers. The author Ellen Deckwitz is an example of a writer who utilises this form of emotional branding by emphasizing her generosity and 'relatability' towards both her readership, and her fellow writers. Jeroen Dera demonstrates how Deckwitz manages

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to highlight this story with credibility. However, following Thompson, by employing such an approach Deckwitz also risks that her readers may not perceive these stories as authentic and fitting, and might actively resist them.

Story-driven strategies of emotional branding sometimes cause a 'cultural backlash' amongst consumers. Sometimes this leads to public resistance, led by a 'loosely organized network of consumers, antibrand activists, bloggers, and opinion leaders in news and entertainment media' (Thompson et al. 2006: 50). Together, they ensure that the stories told by a given company are made into a parody, contested, undermined, and ridiculed. If such resistance persists, this can lead to what Thompson et al. call a 'full-blown brand image crisis' (2006: 62). This divide between a brand and its public is always driven by a loss of trust in the authenticity of the story or the 'aura' of that brand. The 'meaning' of the brand as perceived by the audience no longer matches the meaning of the branding story projected by the company. In yet another interesting crossover to the dual concepts 'economic' and 'symbolic', Thompson et al. conclude that 'the cultural tension between the ideal of authenticity and popular conceptions of commercialism' (2006: 53) often lies at the base of the mismatch between the story that is being told, and the story that the public wants to hear.

Although emotional branding is not applied within the literary segment of the publishing industry on a large scale, the telling of stories is indeed an important way to brand authors, texts, and oeuvres. According to Thompson et al. (2006), this means that the sector is relatively vulnerable to 'cultural backlash', which may occur when consumers are not able or willing to believe such stories. This vulnerability is possibly increased by the internal tensions of the publisher between (the creation and projection of) economic and symbolic value. The friction between authenticity and commerce is omnipresent in this sector and, according to Thomson et al., this can complicate the communication between literary brands and consumers in a myriad ways, as for example becomes evident in the chapter by Sander Bax about the bestselling author Herman Koch.

Branding Books Across the Ages closes with a chapter by Bertram Mourits. With a PhD in Dutch, Mourits has been a publishing editor at the renowned publishing house Atlas Contact in Amsterdam for over ten years. The composers of this volume are very pleased he accepted their invitation to draw some critical conclusions between the various contributions to this book from his specific, manifold (practical) expertise. It is evident that research into branding throughout the centuries sometimes reveals uncomfortable mechanisms that undermine the idea (or the cliché) of literature as a timeless phenomenon, the worth of which will sooner or later become apparent. However, the extent to which processes of branding manifest themselves differently, or even seem largely absent, during particular periods, is for example evidenced by Rob van de Schoor's chapter on Dutch publishing practices in the nineteenth century.

Finally, we must consider the fact that the studies presented in *Branding Books Across the Ages* are primarily focused on the *literary* field. It thus concerns a domain that, economically speaking, forms a relatively small proportion of the total books on offer, which currently in the Netherlands comprises around 40 million books per year (Anonymous 2019). To give a small, estimated indication of the relation of this literary segment compared to the total production of books, the 'CPNB Top 100 2018', listing the 100 best-selling novels of 2018, comprised a total of seven Dutch 'literary' titles (taking a title's inclusion on the shortlist for the Libris Literature Award as the criterion for what counts as 'literature'), together accountable for an estimated total of 400,000 sold copies – that is, 1 per cent of the total book sales in the Netherlands.[2] This is only a fraction of the total production of literary titles: the shortlist of the Libris Literature Award 2018 contains 227 titles.[3] Even when doubled or multiplied by a factor of three or four of the total of sold copies in the Top 100, the contribution of the literary sector when compared to total book sales remains modest. Other sectors of the publishing industry (e.g. school and study books, informative books) function in ways that differ greatly from those in the literary sector, and thus, their branding plays a very different – and generally speaking less contested – role. Therefore, paradoxically, *Branding Books Across the Ages* confirms the unique character of the literary field by analysing a phenomenon – branding – which is seemingly alien to the field, even if this exceptional status is becoming increasingly contested in the twenty-first century.

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[2] The seven authors who are both shortlisted for the Libris Literature Award and occur in the Top 100 are: Murat Isik, Hendrik Groen (with three titles), Tommy Wieringa, Lévi Weemoedt, Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, Pieter Waterdrinker, and Jan van Aken. Compare https://www.cpnb.nl/sites/default/files/cpnb_files/EMBARGO%20CPNB%20Top%20100%20best%20verkochte%20boeken%202018%20def.pdf [accessed 13 October 2019].

[3] https://www.librisprijs.nl/groslijst-2018 [last accessed 13 October 2019].

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