Cultural Branding in the Early Modern Period

The Literary Author[1]

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Abstract
The early modern commercial book market was the cradle of authorial branding. Authors and publishers increasingly explored the construction of authorial brands: a set of recurring and recognizable characteristics associated with authorial images. This chapter looks at branding in the context of the media landscape of the early modern Dutch Republic. Authorial branding developed over time in conjunction with new conceptions of the individual, technological innovations, and the changing role of – amongst others – patrons and publishers. Analyses of the branding of Jan Jansz. Starter (1593-1626) and Sara Maria van der Wilp (1716-1803) illustrate how the non-formalized, dynamic constellation of the literary field inspired various agents to create a range of (multifaceted) author brands on the spectrum 'economic-symbolic'.

Keywords: early modern period, Dutch literature, authorship constructions, Jan Jansz. Starter, Sara Maria van der Wilp

Introduction: *Branding* as a Useful Concept in the Early Modern Period

Shortly after the renowned philosopher Erasmus (1466-1536) died, his Rotterdam house became a place of pilgrimage and, as one of the first

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Figure 1.1 Steven van Lamsweerde, *Sight on the Dom in Utrecht anno 1660.* Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: RP-P-AO-5-23

non-royal figures, he was honoured with a statue as early as 1557 (Visser 2013: 21-23; Becker 1979: 11-62). This form of (cultural) hero-worship can be regarded as a characteristic of the early modern period that in many cases can be related to branding. Brands, not only as identity marks but also as trademarks, already existed prior to the industrial revolution – and the global trade and competition it brought – within the cultural world in any case. One such example can be seen in the way an author's reputation could become incorporated into the branding of a city. The house of Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1687) was marked on several prints of the city centre of Utrecht (see Fig. 1.1). The phenomenon of branding cultural products and especially its creators expanded enormously within the early modern period.

This chapter focuses on authorial brands, which we define as a set of recurring and (even on an associative level) recognizable characteristics connected to authorial images, both discursive and non-discursive. Early modern authorial brands were, as we will argue, a construct of the (sometimes unintended) interaction between multiple agents involved in the processes of production, distribution, and reception of (printed) literary works. In particular, publishers and booksellers proved eager to explore opportunities to profit financially from the branding of authors in their funds. Supported by the lack of clear copyright regulations for authors, some profit-driven publishers even went so far as to cleverly hijack successful authors from their colleagues in the printing business. An early example of the (legitimate) branding of a literary author by a publisher is the way the Amsterdam publisher and bookseller Cornelis van der Plasse (1585-1641) handled the legacy of Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero (1585-1618). He made Bredero posthumously into his 'star author' by publishing his collected works with biographical notes, personal documents such as letters, and portraits in its preliminaries (Jansen 2019). Furthermore, early modern authors themselves – both male and female – were often actively involved in the branding of their authorship and public image, as will become clear from the two cases central to this chapter, Jan Jansz. Starter (1593-1626) and Sara Maria van der Wilp (1716-1803).

The usefulness of the concept of branding for the early modern period was recently convincingly argued by book historian Andrew Pettegree. In his tellingly titled *Brand Luther*, Pettegree traces the origins of the large-scale success of the Reformation to the fact that its religious leader, Luther, was presented as a Europe-wide recognized brand (Pettegree 2015). To achieve this, Pettegree (11) describes how 'Luther and his friends used every instrument of communication known to medieval and Renaissance Europe: correspondence, song, word of mouth, painted and printed images.' Supported by his network of (among others) publishers, painters, theologians, and intellectuals, Luther not only succeeded in establishing a unique public image for himself but also for his printed publications. Both Luther himself and his works shared a distinctive new 'look' which made them immediately recognizable as part of what Pettegree labels as the 'brand Luther'.

Pettegree's book-historical analysis not only proves the usability of the concept of branding for the early modern period but stresses also its fundamental historicity. He shows how Luther's branding was at the same time a cause and consequence of both the development of the printing press into an effective medium and the development of the Reformation into an effective European-wide movement. Indeed, as has been argued in the

general introduction to this book, brands are dynamic phenomena that take shape and function in a specific historical context. In our case, focusing on literary authors, this is the context of early modern literary culture, which was integrated strongly in society as a whole. Literary authorship in the period was, in the words of Berensmeyer, Buelens, and De Moor (2012: 8), a heteronomous 'product of cultural networks and their acts of authorization'. Therefore, before we further explore manifestations and specificities of the branding of (literary) authorship in the early modern Dutch Republic, we will focus on two important developments that had a major impact on the position of the author and the dynamics of the cultural field in this period: the rise of the individual and the increasingly public character of literary culture as a consequence of, among other things, technological and commercial innovation of the printing presses.

Individualization and Print as Motors of Early Modern Branding

The early modern period has often been described as the age in which the self became a matter of international debate, and scientific and societal changes reshaped its concept. The rising prominence of the individual was also reflected in the growing interest in the author's *persona*.[2] In his influential *Renaissance Self-fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980), Stephen Greenblatt (2005: 1) famously contended that in the sixteenth century 'there were both selves and a sense that they could be fashioned'. Greenblatt studied the processes of this self-fashioning for a specific group of persons: literary authors. It is important to note here that the early modern concept of literature differs greatly from present-day conceptions of it, and self-fashioning was a process of negotiation that went beyond the demarcated literary field as presented by Bourdieu. Early modern literature was emphatically part of society as a whole and self-fashioning depended on much more than literary values alone.[3] Literature was, for example, constantly negotiating with all kinds of political and religious powers. However that may be: Greenblatt leaves us with the pertinent conclusion that the early modern period was not only marked by a growing self-consciousness of the individual but also by an increased interest in actively modelling it,

2 See, for example, Taylor 1989.

3 For an introduction on literature's role in the early modern world see for example Geerdink and Montoya 2018, about the concept of literature, especially 159-161. See also: Leemans and Johannes 2013.

especially by literary authors. Indeed, scholars of the early modern period agree that, gradually, a process of individualization took place that provided literary authors with a new kind of authority which went hand in hand with the increasing importance of their distinctive names and personalities. Building on these insights, many of their studies have situated the 'birth' of the *modern* author in this period.[4] Then again, it should be noted medievalist and Renaissance scholars have made equally convincing cases to pinpoint the origins of the autonomous author in earlier periods.[5] With regard to the early manifestations of cultural branding, the cases of Dante (1265-1321), Petrarca (1304-1374), and Chaucer (c. 1343-1400) – and their claims to literary fame – are especially interesting, yet exceptional for their times (Cooper 2010; Braudy 1997: 228-229).

The reason this chapter primarily focuses on the early modern period has to do with a second development which had a major impact on both the function and form of cultural branding: literary culture gained an increasingly public character. There was, for example, an increasing number of public spaces and platforms to perform, including the chambers of rhetoric, the theatre, festive events, public buildings, and – in the eighteenth century – literary societies. It was, however, predominantly due to print culture that the reputation of authors definitively transcended its initially local character (Pettegree 2015: 11). Technological innovation of the printing presses in the second half of the sixteenth century provided publishers with – amongst other things – the opportunity of higher print runs of both texts and images, which radically changed the commercial potential of the book market.[6] Due to this upscaling, the early modern book industry became increasingly oriented towards an anonymous readership. Many authors no longer primarily wrote their works for a small and often well-known public. This need to appeal to a larger audience of potential buyers proved highly stimulating, as we will illustrate, to the development and uses of branding strategies (Berensmeyer, Buelens, and Demoor 2012: 16).[7]

As in modern times, the branding of early modern literary authors was not limited to authorial agency only. On the contrary, sometimes the author

4 See, for example, Viala 1985; Couturier 1995; Ingressia 2015.

5 See, amongst others, Cooper 2010: 361-378; Ascoli 2008; Braudy 1997.

6 Cf. Rasterhoff 2017; Van Netten 2014.

7 It is important to emphasize, though, that literary authors from the early modern period did not write solely for the book market. Many print-publications were intended for a specific audience of, for example, patrons, and moreover, manuscript culture flourished in the period, too. For reasons of coherence, we focus on the area in which authorial branding most evidently plays a pivotal role: commercial print culture.

him- or herself was not even involved in the construction and distribution of their own brand, especially since the early modern literary field did not know any copyright legislation to protect authors as the *owners* of their works. In the Netherlands, author's copyright was only formally recognized in 1812 (Van Vliet 2007: 253-255). Networks were crucial in early modern literary reputation management – whether directed by the author him- or herself or by any other agents.[8] Branding was built on a potentially unlimited number of agents, including not only the profit-seeking publisher-booksellers, who often carried the financial risk of a publication, but also, for example, editors, translators, (possible) patrons, other writers, literary critics or journalists, and even readers.[9] Sometimes these different agents had contradictory interests. For literary authors, print culture and its power to quickly and widely disseminate brands, therefore, not only brought chances but also contained risks[10] – as our discussion of the image of Sara Maria van der Wilp will vividly illustrate.

Both the growing importance and individualization of the author's persona and the commercialization of the book market proved to be, as Andrew Pettegree has illustrated in his survey *The Book in the Renaissance*, dynamic developments which spread with different speed and intensity through early modern Europe (Pettegree 2010). The early modern Dutch Republic provides a particularly interesting focus area. Its status as one of the most important centres of Europe's transnational intellectual community, the *Republic of Letters,* went hand in hand with both the vivid circulation of new enlightened ideas on, amongst others, the growing importance of the individual, and the early rise of a highly developed market for printed materials which made the Dutch presses international leaders in the dissemination of books.[11]

Against this background, the remainder of this chapter will argue how authorial brands in the early modern Dutch Republic were hardly ever unambiguous. Since processes of branding were not formalized, the specific role of the agents, including the audiences, varied. As such, a very diverse range of brands was possible. In the next section, we will elaborate on this thesis

8 As in other periods, you could argue on the basis of Craik 2009.

9 Cf. MacLean 2012, with a telling enumeration of agents (53); and also, for example, Visser 2011: 8; Visser 2013: 19; Berensmeyer, Buelens, and Demoor 2012: 10.

10 See also Sebastiani 2014: 107-124, especially 115.

11 On the Dutch book market, see for example Van Vliet 2007: 253-255; Dijstelberge and Verkruijsse 2010, and, most recently, Pettegree and Der Weduwen 2019; on individualization (and authorship) in the Dutch Republic Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008, especially 17, 21, 28, 160, 171, 189; Jensen Adams 2009, especially 22.

and then illustrate it with the case of the multifaceted branding of the early seventeenth-century Dutch author Jan Jansz. Starter, who, as a hack writer, turned out to be able to orchestrate his own branding to a large extent. Such author-driven branding appears to become impossible later in the early modern period as a consequence of an increase in the diversity of media. In the last two sections of this chapter, we will focus on this development and show how the late eighteenth-century poet Sara Maria van der Wilp operated within a field of conflicting interests between agents, in which she proved – despite considerable efforts – unable to orchestrate her own brand to her liking.

Early Modern Diversity of Brands

The dynamics of the early modern publication context, leading to a diverse range of brands, are related to the early modern literary field being tied up with society at large, as elaborated above. At the end of the sixteenth century, literature first and foremost had a social and intellectual function. This function could not easily be reconciled with a commercial interest. The literary elite was initially not eager to be printed and traded as a brand. P.C. Hooft, for example, even published his first poetic publications without his name on it – although his authorship must have been clear to his inner circle, for example from the first emblem in his *Emblemata Amatoria* (1611), with the motto 'Zij steeckt om hoogh het hooft' (She raises the head [*hoofd*]) (Hooft 1611: 78-79). The initial reluctance of Dutch authors to be part of the world of print could probably also be related to its commerciality and the reputations of the profit-oriented publishers, who were, especially in the Dutch Republic, infamously seen as 'moneygrubbers' (*geldwolven*).[12] In due course (or very quickly, as the example of Starter below will show) many authors overcame the aversion to print and, stimulated by ongoing processes of individualization, the number of authors who print-published their literary works openly was on the rise throughout the whole of the seventeenth century. Publishers would turn out to be of major importance for the branding of literary authors (Rasterhoff 2017: 82), while authors themselves increasingly came to recognize the possibilities of print and learned to profit from it.

12 See Van Vliet 2007. Some critical contemporaries, especially in England, even characterized the business of book publication in terms of 'paper-prostitution', which became an increasingly urgent matter in relation to the growing presence of the individual author in the course of the seventeenth century. McCarthy 2020: chapter 5.

Due to the rising number of authors from the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, it became increasingly important for them to distinguish themselves from others (Geerdink 2012: 13-15, 19; Johannes 2001-2002: 351-354). Notably, the growing focus on publishing in the vernacular, due to the decline of Latin as the *lingua franca* of the learned world and the (assumed) dominance of French translations, particularly in the Dutch theatres, stressed the limits of the Republic's book market and forced Dutch authors into competition.[13] Berensmeyer, Buelens, and Demoor (2012: 18) even argue that authorial branding, led by actors from the book market, intensified because of the decrease of the prestige of literary authors: 'What is needed then is a surplus of energy invested in the staging and presentation of authors in the media, in the marketing of faces and signatures – some authors have to be made more special, more valuable than others'. Consequently, authors' brands could vary greatly and should be related to their – and their publishers – intended audiences.

Authors who did not write solely as amateurs for their own social network – an authorial form that remained important during the whole of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – could have had various and not always distinct reasons for distributing their works, related to, for example, ideology, moneymaking, or reputation management. In distributing their works, they could focus on at least two kinds of audiences: a wider and anonymous audience, or a more specific audience of one or more (possible) patrons. Writing primarily for the book market, an author needed a brand that attracted an audience as large as possible, whereas when writing for patrons, without necessarily meaning the opposite, an author's brand should (also) be very specifically related to the interests of the patron(s). Patronage is a fundamental and, in comparison with modern times, distinguishable characteristic of the early modern literary field and thus of the branding of literary authors.

Just like branding, patronage in the early modern period was scarcely formalized. It could be defined as any relationship between an author and someone of a higher class or socioeconomic standing in which services were exchanged. This exchange was reciprocal and literary products were part of the reciprocity. This social practice was important in a country such as the Dutch Republic, where court culture was less rich

13 This was, for example, one of the points of debate in the so-called 'Poëtenstryt' (War of the Poets). See Van Deinsen 2017, especially 41-46. For an international perspective on the matter, see Turnovsky 2010.

and dominant than in other European countries (Geerdink 2012: 13-15).[14] Patronage could lead to personal relationships of longer duration,[15] but it could also easily be characterized as commercial professionalism as it consisted of, in the words of Helen Smith (2012: 30), 'a series of separable and isolated transactions in which cultural goods are traded for money or favour'. Authors tried their best to win patron's favours, for example by writing occasional poems and dedicating books (Smith 2012: 30). In return, they received gifts or payments, but more often, they profited in an indirect manner: their patrons, for example, arranged jobs for them, or introduced them to networks that could be relevant for their jobs by inviting them to dinners and parties. Authors wrote poems in praise of their patrons and their political, commercial, and cultural deeds and importance. In many cases, a patron would like to have distributed this praise as widely as possible. An author's brand was therefore instrumental for the interests of patrons as well. They were publicly associated with an author, and thus wanted to be associated with characteristics of this author which advanced their own symbolic capital. Authors, on the other hand, could brand themselves in relation to their patrons by making their relationship public and thus emphasizing how they were appreciated by a specific person or a specific group of persons who possessed, for example, high standing in cultural circles, political influence, or great wealth. A patron could also actively participate in the process of authorial branding by publicly advertising the relationship or specific characteristics of the author. A case in point is an author like Jan Vos (1610-1667), who wrote occasional poetry and plays and maintained relationships of patronage with many among the political elite of Amsterdam around the middle of the seventeenth century. His brand consisted of the conventional characteristics of a lofty poet, but some specific associations were added that related directly to either his relationship with his patrons or with the larger audience. Vos's visual style was, for example, part of his brand, and indeed a characteristic that made him popular with the public at large. He needed a large audience of readers in order to manage both his own reputation and the reputations of his patrons. It was precisely the

14 Throughout Europe, informal patronage began to play an increasingly important role during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Brewer (1997: 162-163) shows how in England informal patronage evolved as a consequence of the marginalization of court patronage during the eighteenth century. See also Prescott 2003: 112-115; Smith (2012) argues convincingly it evolved even earlier, from the sixteenth century onwards, and existed next to court patronage.

15 This is a crucial part of the definition of patronage that De Beer 2013 uses in line with Griffin 1996.

success of Vos's printed publications that made him into a useful client for his patrons (Geerdink 2012).

Writing for the larger public, writing for specific patrons, or (as happened most often) a combination of these, could all lead to both economic and symbolic capital, which were dynamically interrelated. Branding, as the Introduction to this book describes in more detail, falls roughly into two forms, which often interact: economic and symbolic capital. This distinction proves fruitful when looking at the early modern period, too, but it is impossible to separate the two completely, and we might even want to add a third manifestation as part of symbolic capital: social capital. Whereas Bourdieu's symbolic capital refers first and foremost to an author's position within the demarcated literary field, an early modern author's production and branding was also, as we described above, strongly related to his or her position in society at large.[16]

An early modern author's brand could be profitable on either side of the symbolic-economic spectrum: there was the brand 'Vondel' on the one side (the lofty author without economic imperatives) and the brand 'Campo Weyerman' on the other (the non-imposing professional author writing for money, or hack writer). Most early modern authorial brands were located somewhere between these two poles. There was thus no such thing as one successful brand for early modern literary authors, nor was unambiguity a precondition for successful branding.

Moreover, the example of Katharina Lescailje (1649-1711)[17] shows that for certain authors it could be profitable not only to refrain from choosing between the two ends of the spectrum but to stay out of sight altogether, to be 'non-branded'. Lescailje was both a poet and a publisher and in this dual capacity was able to brand herself in a profitable way, for example by publishing her collected works or by including textual and visual elements in the front matter of publications of her own poetry – but she did not. On the contrary, although she published some of her own works under her own name, her self-representation in these works and its front matter is neutral at least (Geerdink 2020). She did not put herself in the spotlight and, contrary to the emerging convention, she declined to have her portrait made or distributed. As a woman, and being unmarried, it would have been

16 This works both ways: an author's social position was part of his literary reputation, whereas literary reputation could lead to social mobility. We are here elaborating on ideas presented by Ingo Berensmeyer during the KNAW-colloquium *Reputation Cultures in Early Modern Europe*, 27-28 August 2018, Amsterdam.

17 Biographical information in Van Gemert 2010: 308-315.

harmful to her reputation should she eulogize herself, and as a publisher, Lescailje's income depended on her reputation within literary and political elite circles. As we have argued before, authors could not, in the end, completely control their own branding, and Lescailje's collected works were published twenty years after she had died. The front matter of this monumentally designed publication in three volumes is branding at work: the publisher – tellingly, Lescailje's nephew – included many poems full of praise of the author, a portrait of Lescailje, and a short introduction to her life and works (Lescailje 1731).

The Branding of Jan Jansz. Starter (1593-1626)

The fact that early modern branding was seldom unambiguous, and should be interpreted in terms of the constant dynamics between the strife for symbolic and economic capital, becomes strikingly clear if we look at the branding strategies of Jan Jansz. Starter and his publishers. Starter, born to English parents, lived and worked alternately in Amsterdam, Leeuwarden, and Franeker as a poet and publisher before he participated in the Thirty Years War (1618-1648) as a chronicler in the service of a German count. In this capacity, he would eventually meet his end in Hungary.[18] Although little more is known about his life, relatively many sources survived about the ways Starter tried to make money with his literary works.[19] It turns out he did not exclude any possible way to do this. This meant his publications functioned in the contexts of both patronage and the commercial book market. Starter was actively engaged in the printing of all of his publications and tried to brand himself as suitable for his specific public of patrons and the public at large at the same time. These audiences asked for partly overlapping but also partly conflicting manifestations of authorship, which led to ambiguities in Starter's brand.

That Starter operated in between patronage and book market is apparent from his publication strategies. Obviously aiming for patronage, he dedicated works to several authorities and wrote occasional poetry within elite circles in both Amsterdam and Friesland. Starter received small rewards for these

18 There are many publications about Starter's works and lives, but especially the older ones suffer under romanticized images of Starter that hide the facts or even disclose untruths. More reliable is the most recent publication about Starter, Breuker 2016: 83-110. Older but more detailed and likewise reliable is Brouwer 1940.

19 Mentioned (and in many cases reprinted) in Brouwer 1940.

dedications, for example from the States-General or the city of Groningen, and he agreed to write poetry for a group of wealthy Amsterdam merchants in exchange for a weekly pension of twelve guilders. At the same time, Starter turned to the market by acting as his own publisher when republishing a collection of poetry with the addition of some of his own poems in 1617, evidently hoping to profit from its sales. He also worked on commission for the Amsterdam publisher Van der Plasse, who paid in 1623 'a fair amount of money' (*groote kosten*) to let Starter finish a play by the popular and admired poet Bredero.[20] Both contexts – patronage and the book market – could also interact within one and the same publication: whereas Starter published his songbook the *Friesche Lusthof* (1621) to sell on the market for his own profit, he included in it many poems that had originated in a context of patronage, especially nuptial poetry.[21] Moreover, he dedicated the book to a group of rich Frisian individuals who supported him in making the publication happen: crowdfunding *avant la lettre*.[22]

The brand *Starter*, as created by himself and other agents (such as his publishers and patrons in both Amsterdam and Friesland, but also other contemporary authors), served Starter's position and income in the contexts of both patronage and the book market at large. For his patrons, it was important that the brand portrayed Starter as a lofty poet, someone they wanted to be associated with. Indeed, his brand is, on the one hand, modelled on the accepted, classically inspired image of a lofty poet. On the other hand, Starter's brand shows a joyful author who wrote in the first place to please the larger public – and thus did not avoid vulgar humour, eroticism, and references to everyday life among the middle and lower classes. The two sides of Starter's brand conflicted, since elite patrons wanted to support foremost authors who were highly esteemed within the cultural elite, whereas the public of buying readers could be put off by too much loftiness and classical references. There was one characteristic though that could potentially please members of both audiences – his patrons from the

20 In *Angeniet*, Amsterdam: C. van der Plasse / Paulus Aertsz van Ravesteyn, 1623, 'Aen den leser'. *T'Vermaeck der Ieught* was originally published by Abraham van den Rade, Leeuwarden 1616 and reprinted (illegally?) by Starter himself in 1617.

21 That he aimed to profit from the publication himself appears most clearly from the privilege Starter requested for the *Friesche Lusthof*. In the Dutch Republic, it was not common for authors to request a privilege, nor to be included as one of the persons that had to be paid a fine when the privilege was violated.

22 There is one copy of the *Friesche Lusthof* with a list of subscribers (in the Groningen University Library). In the accompanying poem, P. Knijff thanks the 'liefhebbers' on the list for their support of Starter's enterprise.

Frisian elite and the public at large within this province – and this indeed was played as a trump card: Starter's Frisian background and connections (Breuker 2016; Brouwer 1940: 211-218).

These parts of Starter's branding may appear to be mutually exclusive, but in practice they could also operate side by side. Very tellingly, the three aspects of Starter's brand appear altogether in the front matter of the play *Timbre de Cardone* (1618), in which Starter emphasizes, while addressing the reader, how he cannot reach the level of Heinsius, Hooft, or Bredero – of whom especially the two first-mentioned authors were famous examples of the classically inspired lofty poet – and how his only aim is to entertain his readers. In the laudatory poem immediately following his own address, however, his Frisian colleague Boudewyn Jansen Wellens presents Starter emphatically as the Frisian Hooft or Bredero. Since Starter print-published the play himself, he was self-consciously emphasizing his 'Frisianness' while consolidating the discrepancy between the lofty author and the crowd-puller.

Starter's ambitious songbook the *Friesche Lusthof*, which already plays the 'Frisian' card in its title, again plays with the seeming discrepancy of Starter's brand. The volume opens with Starter's portrait, illustrating its strong classical component. The frontispiece (Fig. 1.2) presents the portrait of the author with a laurel wreath, the classical symbol of poetic honour. The upper side of the cartouche contains his coat of arms. The author portrait and a copy of the book are placed on a shell flanked by two swans floating on the water, gaining speed thanks to the wind-catching putti on top of it. Significantly, the classical image of Starter is recreated in a slightly different manner on the comparable frontispiece of the enlarged second edition of the *Friesche Lusthof* (1623) (Fig. 1.3). The two swans now are carrying Jocus, the personified classical god of jests, and his counterpart Cupid, the god of love. These additions characterize the contents of the songbook emphatically as joyful and related to love. Since these are exactly the elements that must have appealed to the larger public, the change in Starter's visual representation can be related to the other side of his brand, which is that of the crowd-puller.

Indeed, in the address to the readers, Starter demonstrates himself unhappy with the fact that his songs and poems have been published before, without his consent. This is harmful to himself as much as his publisher, he emphasizes, but not for the same reasons: 'he took away my honour, but my publisher's pay'.[23] For himself, he states, it is only a matter of honour, whereas his publisher is hurt financially by the pirate edition. He thus places himself in the classical tradition, refraining from any economic imperatives

23 '[…] hy most my mijn eer, mijn Druckers nut ontrucken' (vs. 36).

Figure 1.2 ***Portrait of Jan Jansz. Starter*. In: Starter, Jan Jansz. *Friesche lust-hof, beplant met verscheyde stichtelijcke minne-liedekens, gedichten, ende boertige kluchten*. Amsterdam: weduwe Dirck Pietersz Voscuyl, 1621. KB Nationale bibliotheek, sign, KW 5 B 1**

for writing, although we do know these imperatives were of importance for him. In the same address, Starter emphasizes the importance of the reading public. He states that the satisfaction of the public is his pay, and that he will publish a sequel to the *Friesche Lusthof* as soon as he notices his readers like it. A sequel

> will follow immediately, as I will notice,
> That you like my works, if only a little bit
> Because honest pay sweetens labour's burden.[24]

The *Friesche Lusthof* thus not only shows Starter as a lofty poet, but also as a poet who writes for a larger audience, that should buy his books if they want to read more of it. This image of the crowd-puller is further emphasized by

24 'Daedlijck volgen sal, soo veer ick kan bemercken / Dat ghy in 't minste schept behagen in mijn wercken / Want eerelijcke loon des arbeyds last versoet' (vs. 47-49).

Figure 1.3 **Jan van de Velde (II), *Portrait of Jan Jansz Starter.* in: Starter, Jan Jansz. *Friesche lust-hof, beplant met verscheyde stichtelijcke minne-liedekens, gedichten, ende boertige kluchten*, 2nd edition. Amsterdam: weduwe Dirck Pietersz Voscuyl, 1623. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: RP-P-OB-15.270**

the fact he 'crowdfunded' his *Friesche Lusthof* and advertises this within the publication.

Starter's multifaceted brand was adopted and used strategically by all the agents involved. Starter's orientation towards a popular readership was not only veiled by the dominance of the classical representation of his authorial image but also by the way he carefully orchestrated his publications in relation to several specific publics. One surviving copy of the *Friesche Lusthof* has additional front matter that should be connected to the subscribers that financially supported Starter to make the publication happen.[25] Poems by several of Starter's colleagues were added. One of these is a poem praising the subscribers, who are listed within the poem. The other poems praise Starter emphatically as a poet of great importance for Friesland. It cannot be a coincidence that all his subscribers are from the Frisian elite. In other

25 University Library Groningen, signature UB uklu 'EP'EP E29 Kluis.

cases, Starter published works with differing front matter that was adapted to his patrons for that specific publication.[26]

In the end, Starter's multifaceted branding was, both economically and symbolically, rather successful. Most tellingly, publisher Van der Plasse presents him as the author who finished Bredero's play *Angeniet* in 1619, attributing to him great renown and qualities comparable to Bredero's, while mentioning the high price he had to pay Starter for this job. Moreover, Starter's *Friesche Lusthof* was reprinted time and again.[27] And although he was far from rich and legal sources referring to his debts even suggest he encountered recurring financial troubles, Starter did succeed in making a living as a literary author, which was far from common in the early seventeenth-century Dutch Republic.[28] Contemporary sources give the impression that he was generally regarded as the lofty author of his portrait, although there are some references to critical voices, among them the barking dogs on that same portrait.[29] Of these critical voices, only few examples survived, most famously a poem in which he is criticized for writing erotic songs only to please the larger public. It was published only after his death.[30] At the same time, his representation as a lofty author also continued after his death. Somewhere around 1720, for example, his likeness – including the significant laurel wreath as symbol of poetic honour – was painted for the *Panpoëticon Batavûm*, an eighteenth-century collector's cabinet containing the portraits of the foremost literary and intellectual figures in the Dutch Republic (Fig. 1.4).[31]

26 See, for another example, Breuker 2016: 103 note 86.

27 STCN: six reprints between 1621 and 1634.

28 This appears in general literary histories of the period, for example Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008; Leemans and Johannes 2013. There is a lack of studies focused on literary authors and their profits in the Dutch Republic. Nina Geerdink's ongoing NWO-Veni project *Poets and Profits: A New History of Literary Authorship in the Dutch Republic, 1550-1750* aims to provide the first systematic inquiry into the matter. Some of the results are presented in a theme issue of *Nederlandse letterkunde*, edited by Van den Braber et al. (2020).

29 Starter mentions the criticism himself in a poem addressed to his friend the poet Dirck Graswinckel, published in the front matter of Starter's play *Daraïde* (1621). The dogs in the frontispiece portrait are on the background, looking at the floating book and Starter's head. It seems as if their pose was more aggressive in the frontispiece of the second edition, which suggests that Starter received (more) criticism as a consequence of the publication of the *Friesche Lusthof*.

30 The poem, 'Klagte van Jan Jansz Starter', was probably written by Christoffel van Langerack and published for the first time in Camphuysens *Stichtelyke Rymen* (1647). See Porteman and Smits-Veldt 2008: 469. Within the poem, the popularity of the *Friesche Lustfhof* is mentioned as a reason for its critical position: Starter's vulgarity was the more blameworthy since it reached so many people.

31 For the history of the *Panpoëticon Batavûm*, see Van Deinsen 2016; Van Deinsen 2017: 149-248.

Figure 1.4 Arnoud van Halen, *Portrait Jan Jansz Starter*, 1700-1732. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: SK-A-4567

The success of Starter's branding should be related to the fact he orchestrated his brand carefully. Other agents, such as publishers and patrons, were involved, but as far as we can reconstruct the process on the basis of the available sources, it seems Starter himself took the lead in the printing of every single publication. This allowed him to create a brand with balanced ambiguity, profitable in both contexts of patronage and the book market at

large. The specific contexts of Starter's authorship (including his geographical whereabouts and his economic motives) are in itself not representative for early modern authorship, but we contend that his multifaceted branding was. The same accounts for the diversity of media used in Starter's branding, which should certainly also be related to its success. In the next section, we elaborate on the use of media in branding processes, and specifically on the increase of visual components during the early modern period. This early in the seventeenth century, it was far from common that almost all of an author's publications should be accompanied by (different) author portraits, as Starter's were.

Developments in Early Modern Media of Branding

The media used in early modern branding were as varied as the brands themselves and became even more varied over time as a consequence of the innovative printing presses. These not only provided authors and other agents with the opportunity to make a broad audience familiar with textually constructed brands but also disseminated visual images that helped to shape the image of the author. In particular, the author portrait would become an important aspect of authorial branding. Although we should not forget the importance of oral and manuscript culture, print was thus the most significant medium for early modern branding.

The influential role of print in constructing and disseminating the reputation of authors becomes especially clear – as the case of Starter has already illustrated – in the growing prominence of front matter in early modern books. In the course of the seventeenth century, a book's front matter, which consisted of both textual elements (such as prefaces, dedications, and privileges) and visual elements (such as frontispieces and author portraits), became more and more extensive and started to serve an increasingly commercial purpose (Saenger 2016). These texts and images should be read as transactional and have a preparatory function to the perception of the reader. Agents in the process of branding actively used front matter to present authors and their brand to their public. By, for example, explicitly dedicating the publication to a prominent patron or including lauds by renowned poets, the reputation of both the work itself and its author was stressed to the reading public.

Over the course of the early modern period, a writer's face became a progressively more important feature of his or her authorship that could also function independently of the context of book publications.

Sixteenth-century humanists, for example, started including portraits of themselves in their letters. These portraits functioned, as Anthony Griffiths (2016: 399) has argued, as 'the face-to-face introduction to a distant colleague whom they were unlikely ever to meet in person'. From the seventeenth century onwards, stimulated by the growing individualization of the self, the demand for printed author portraits, both to be included in publications or sold separately, significantly increased and the business of printed author portraits became booming (Griffiths 1998: 193; Burke 1998: 151-154).[32] As such, a relatively wide public could become familiar with the faces of their admired writers, even if they could not read. This provided both the publisher and the writer with yet another opportunity to brand the author's public image. Prominently placed in the front matter of early modern books, these portraits credentialled the text and forced the reader to recognize the authority conveyed by the gaze of the author (Ezell 2012: 31-45; Enenkel 2011: 149-180). Often, these portraits were carefully modelled and loaded with iconographical elements to stress the specific reputation of the author. Author portraits frequently contained elements visualizing the symbolic status (i.e. literary or intellectual authority) of the depicted, for example by incorporating associations to the ideal of the classical author, as was the case with Starter.

The branding of authors was, however, not only limited to books written by these authors. Another important development in the expanding media landscape of the early modern period was the coming into being of the periodical press, which started to play a fundamental role in the dissemination and evaluation of an author's reputation and brand. This complicated the branding process by bringing in a new set of agents. As a result, it could prove difficult to control a brand and some authors were confronted with the undesirable effects of their public image, as was the case with Sara Maria van der Wilp.

The Branding of Sara Maria van der Wilp (1716-1803)

The growing importance and risks of different media, both textual and visual, in the branding of early modern authorship is illustrated in a particular

32 With regard to the Dutch Republic systematic data on the subject is lacking. Lieke van Deinsen's ongoing research on the portraits of women writers and the depiction of intellectual and literary authority aims to provide the first systematic inquiry into the matter.

way in the case of the Amsterdam poet Sara Maria van der Wilp.[33] In 1772, having written primarily occasional poetry – often included in the works of others – and an incidental translation, Van der Wilp decided it was about time for the publication of a first ambitious volume of her individual poetry. The renowned literary bookseller Pieter Meijer (1718-1781) proved willing to provide her with the opportunity to showcase her authorship to the broader public.[34] She dedicated the luxuriously designed volume to poet and art patron Bernardus de Bosch (1709-1786). For the forthcoming publication of *Gedichten*, Van der Wilp also decided to keep up with the literary fashion in wanting her readers welcomed by her engraved portrait. In doing so, she became part of the increasing number of early modern women writers who started to use their author portrait to stress their reputation as a writer (Van Deinsen 2019). They often portrayed themselves in the act of writing, in their study, surrounded by books. As such these portraits undeniably combined their inevitable femininity and authorial authority into one image.[35]

Her eye fell on miniaturist Joseph Marinkelle (1732-1782)[36] to draw her portrait and the established engraver Jacobus Houbraken was appointed to translate the portrait into print. The final result (Fig. 1.5), however, did not please her audience, nor, eventually, the poet herself. After its publication, the portrait provoked a torrent of criticism that would result in a fierce argument between the painter and the poet who had tried so carefully to construct her visual image. The genesis of the portrait and the juicy details of the dispute that followed its publication were memorialized by Marinkelle (1772) in *Oprecht verhaal, wegens het portraitteeren van mejuffrouw Sara Maria van der Wilp*. This pamphlet reveals not only the growing importance of the visual image in the branding of early modern authorship but also makes clear that it could sometimes end up being counterproductive, and as such illustrates that the branding of an author could result in active and open resistance.

In *Oprecht verhaal*, Marinkelle recounted how a tenacious Van der Wilp had forced him to portray her exactly to her liking. She had persuaded him to depict her dressed with 'antique taste': 'bareheaded, with an unsecured

33 For a biographical sketch of Van der Wilp, see Van Strien 1997: 561-564.

34 Pieter Meijer's intended public transcended the Amsterdam market. New publications in his fund were announced in several national newspapers. See, for example, *Leydse Courant* 25 May 1772.

35 For an exposition of the problematic nature of the author portrait of female authors, see also Simonin 2002: 35-57.

36 On Joseph Marinkelle, see Staring 1948: 132-146; Schaffers-Bodenhausen 2012: 509-510, 512.

Figure 1.5 Jacob Houbraken, after Joseph Marinkelle, *Portrait of Sara Maria van der Wilp*, 1771. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam: RP-P-OB-48.395

bosom and a Paper in the hand' (Marinkelle 1772: 1-2).[37] Every suggestion the artist came up with for a more 'usual, modern', and fashionable gown was brushed aside by the stubborn poet out of fear of being 'dated' too quickly. Eventually, the artist gave in. He drew the portrait as his client wished, so it could be engraved and prepared for publication. In the end, and

37 '[...] blootshoofds, met een ongedekte boezem en een Papier in de hand, verbeeld te worden; en dit een antique smaak te noemen.'

Figure 1.6 Reinier Vinkeles, after Daniël Bruyninx, *Portrait of Sara Maria van der Wilp*, 1772. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-P-OB-62.953

pushed by the firm deadline of bookseller Meijer, Van der Wilp's collection of poems – including the portrait – appeared as planned before the turn of the year (Van der Wilp 1772).

Not long after the publication of the collection, Marinkelle was summoned to Van der Wilp's home. The unsuspecting painter had barely entered the house when he was met by a tirade. In uncovered terms, the furious Van der Wilp told him that several contemporaries had reached out to her to proclaim their aversion to the portrait and its negative effect on her public image: 'they said that I looked like a shrew; a dragon of a wife, […] an impertinent

Whore, with Breasts like the udders of a cow' (Marinkelle 1772: 7), she told him.[38] She had even received a letter urging her to 'destroy' all the circulating portraits and advising her to demand the portrait's maker openly apologize for the damage he had done to her immaculate reputation. Following this suggestion, she urged him to publish a pre-digested rectification in the local newspapers that absolved both herself and Marinkelle of all responsibility and blamed the final result on the respected yet elderly engraver Houbraken.

Initially, Marinkelle respectfully declined, but he reconsidered after the message reached him that Houbraken had proclaimed he was no longer inclined to engrave after his drawings. In the meantime, to make matters worse, Van der Wilp had commissioned a second author portrait by Marinkelle's foremost competitors, miniaturist Daniël Bruyninx (1724-1787) and upcoming engraver Reinier Vinkeles (1741-1816). His surprise was all the greater when it turned out that this time, without hesitation or arguing, the poet had exchanged the hated classical costume for a modern and fashionable look from her own closet. As such, the new portrait (Fig 1.6) took the form Marinkelle had argued for in the first place: 'a modest figure, with a cap and a covered bosom'. In the poem Van der Wilp wrote to accompany the new portrait, she openly distanced herself from the former portrait, urging her readers to: 'reject the first print, which displeases me and everyone / Although it carries my name, it does not carry my likeness'.[39]

The situation left Marinkelle little other option than to follow suit and publicly defend himself. It would, however, not be the advert Van der Wilp had in mind. On 19 May 1772 the *Amsterdamsche Courant* posted the following lines:

> MARINKELLE, who values his reputation and does so not without reason, cannot but make known to everyone that he does not acknowledge the Resemblance between the Print placed before Ms. VAN DER WILP's Poetry and the Drawing by his Hand. He leaves to the judgement of others, who have seen his drawing alongside it, to see how it is copied.[40]

38 '[...] een ieder als uitschreeuwde de leelykheid van de uitgegeven Plaat; dat men zeide, *dat zy wel een Viswyf geleek, een dragonder van een Wyf, daar men eerder mede zoude verkiezen te eeten, dan te vegten;* en daarenboven nog, *een onbeschaamde Hoer, met Borsten als Koe-uiëren*, enz.'

39 'Verwerp dan de eerste print, die mij en elk mishaagt, / Mijn' naam wel, maar geen' zweem van mijn gelijknis draagt'. Poem included in the engraving.

40 'MARINKELLE, *op zyne Reputaasie niet zonder reden gesteld zynde, kan niet wel naar laten, een ieder bekend te maken, dat by die Gelykenis in de Plaat, voor het Dichtwerk van Mejuff.* VAN

The unfortunate artist, however, did not achieve his goal, for his colleagues – Vinkeles ahead – interpreted his words as an attempt to 'smear the established fame' of the old Houbraken; Marinkelle feared for his earnings. At stake was his honour: 'not the honour of a poet, who in her livelihood did not depend on her reputation, but the honour of an artist, who's incomings are directly related to his reputation'. In a final attempt to save his damaged reputation, he published his lengthy pamphlet.

The purpose of the pamphlet, however, most likely went further than just saving Marinkelle's damaged reputation. Although not explicitly mentioned on the title page, it is likely that Van der Wilp's own bookseller, Pieter Meijer, had a hand in its production and distribution. The choice to use a rather peculiar format (*in quarto*) and the corresponding watermark between Van der Wilp's *Poems* and the Pamphlet at least suggests the use of the same presses, and provided buyers with the evident option to bind the two together. In addition, based on the fact that practically every existing copy of Van der Wilp's *Poems* not only contains the two portraits but also the critical pamphlet, it is highly likely they were all sold in the same bookshop. Did Meijer – whose commercial instincts notoriously outweighed the interests of his authors, sometimes – perhaps add fuel to the fire to promote sales (De Vries 2005: 81-89; De Vries 2005: 36-52)? Although conclusive evidence of Meijer's involvement is lacking, the pamphlet did indeed boost Van der Wilp's public attention. This shows how a scandal could also become part of the process of branding. The leading literary journal *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* published a critical discussion of the controversy and several readers added handwritten notes to the portraits included in their copies, taking position in the controversy.[41] One might even conclude that, for a substantial part of the reading public, the dispute about the portraits became the foremost element of the Van der Wilp brand.

The case of Sara Maria van der Wilp illustrates not only the impact of visual branding but also places emphasis on the growing influence of media outside the book on the reputation of an author. The controversy also highlights the different (sometimes conflicting) interests of parties involved in the branding of early modern authorship. Whereas Van der Wilp pursued poetic honour (symbolic capital), both Marinkelle and Pieter Meijer were most likely primarily driven by commercial motives (economic capital).

DER WILP, *geplaatst, niet voor de Zynen, in de Tekening gebragt, erkent; en aan het Oordeel van een ieder, die 'er de Tekening by zie, overlaat, hoe dezelve gevolgd is.*'

41 See, for example, the handwritten notes added by B.S. in the UBN edition of Van der Wilp's *Gedichten* [OD 456 c 229].

All the same, eventually her branding had not the effect Van der Wilp intended. The publication of *Gedichten* (1772) would prove to be her first and last individual book and Van der Wilp silently disappeared into oblivion.

Concluding Remarks

The increasingly commercialized early modern Dutch book market proved a breeding ground for the literary branding of authorship. Early modern branding was part of a dynamic historical context and developed over time, interacting with new conceptions of the individual, technological innovations of the media landscape, and the changing role of – among other actors – patrons and publishers. The non-formalized yet extremely dynamic constellation of the early modern literary field invited agents to explore new possibilities to market authors to the fullest and brought about the creation of a wide range of (often multifaceted) author brands on a spectrum running from 'economic' to 'symbolic', which was created by various agents, varying from case to case. In direct relation to the rapidly changing and expanding media landscape, branding strategies quickly intensified over the course of the early modern period.

In some cases, authors proved adept at managing their own brand, as Starter did. In other situations, they ended up caught between the interests of other agents, as happened with Van der Wilp. Both an author's interest on the spectrum of symbolic-economic advancement and the availability of specific media of branding were directly connected to the possibility of (successfully) engaging in one's own branding. Whereas Starter modelled himself after Vondel to emphasize the symbolic side of his authorial representation, his imperatives proved emphatically to be (also) social and financial, which resulted in a multidimensional brand, distributed by the common media of his time, and used in innovative ways. Van der Wilp's modelling and imperatives were both on the symbolical side and made her brand, at first glance, less ambiguous. In the way it was created, however, ambiguity originated from the question of how an author should be depicted if branded to appeal to this end of the spectrum. The media element of branding increased and diversified during the period, which increased the possibilities but, at the same time, also increased the risks. This was probably the reason for the relative success of Starter's branding as opposed to Van der Wilp's failure.

The brands of both Starter and Van der Wilp, and those of other early modern authors, were created within a literary culture that in comparison

to the present-day publishing industry was very dynamic and hardly formalized. The lack of copyright agreements for authors made the 'market for branding' full of possibilities on the one side, and full of agents with specific and often contradictory interests on the other. Even though success is never guaranteed when branding literary authorship, this surely was the case in the early modern Dutch Republic.

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