



Marketing and Me

Stuart Walton

AS SOMEBODY WHO USES an ad-blocker, laboriously deletes the ads in his Twitter and Facebook feeds, and hits the mute button on the remote when the TV ads come on, I am not the most likely candidate to front a marketing campaign. When my first books were published in the 1990s, you typically waited for the publicist to draw up a schedule of radio interviews, or perhaps do nothing at all, and that was it.

In today's climate, you are very much expected to do your own marketing as far as possible. People who draw a salary for marketing want to know what marketing you are doing for yourself. The most offputting aspect of self-publishing is doing your own marketing, and yet publishers with marketing departments also insist on it, while importuning you to tell them what they ought to do. Anything fewer than two thousand Twitter followers, many of whom are themselves only using Twitter for marketing purposes, is distinctly unhelpful.

In 2005, a publisher arranged a trip to Madrid for me, during which I was interviewed successively by a choreographed enfilade of print and radio journalists. An interpreter was on hand to cope with my shameful lack of Spanish, there was lunch in the middle of it all, and in the evening, I was left in peace to watch the Champions League final in my hotel room. That was as close to comfortable as I ever got with publicity.

By contrast, a recent publisher expected me to dragoon my Facebook friends into going on to the Amazon page for my book and giving me



generous star ratings. A fair few of them did, to no avail other than a faint feeling on my part of having cheapened my relationships. I don't mind putting up links to unsolicited reviews of my books, or indeed of podcast interviews about them, but I won't march up and down Oxford Street bearing a placard with my face on it, nor slip into anything construable as advertising talk. 'This Christmas, why not give him *Bitter Remorse* by Stuart Walton, the memoir that won't wash out? Stuart Walton — because nothing ends in tears that didn't start in them. Batteries not included.'

Essentially, what I don't like about marketing is that it boils down to telling people what to do, and there is quite enough of that already. At twenty-two, I nearly applied to join the Royal Navy, until it occurred to me that it would conceivably involve rather a lot of being told what to do. And then there is the indefinable line, which only the writer can see, that separates the unvarnished truth from reckless embellishment. 'Walton has written the first book ever to seek the meaning of life that has eluded philosophers for centuries.' 'This book made me laugh until I was stretchered into the ED with a strangulated inguinal hernia.'

The trouble is, if somebody doesn't let the world know that another book has been added to it, nobody will *ever* know. I just want to feel that, once I've written it, revised it, proofread it, approved the cover, and thanked the editorial team, my work is done.