

Troubador Publishing interview with John Taylor, co-author of *The Psychology of Spies and Spying*

Tell us a little bit about yourselves as authors ...and what are your credentials to write a book on spies and spying?



Professor Adrian Furnham was previously a lecturer at Pembroke College, Oxford, Professor of Psychology at University College London and is now Professor of Management at BI, Norwegian Business School as well as Principal Psychologist at Stamford Associates. He has written over 1300 scientific papers and 95 books.



I joined the British Foreign Office in 1971 and on retirement established my own company which went on to train and advise intelligence and security services around the world. I am now a senior research fellow in the Department of War Studies, King's College London where I lecture on their master's course on intelligence.

Both of us have been actively involved in the world of intelligence analysis, training and operations for several decades.

What made you decide to write a book about spies and spying?

Spying has always intrigued and now there is more and more in the open sector as well as in fiction. Some of it is accurate and fair, but most is not. As a consequence of endless debates, we decided to write a book which was authoritative, and which would give readers some genuine insights into this opaque world and the impact its activities have had on domestic and world events.

Without giving too much away, what can we expect when we read your book?

'The Psychology of Spies and Spying' tells the story of the people involved in spying: the human sources (agents) who betray their country or organisation and the professional intelligence officers who manage the collection and reporting process. The book includes many stories to illustrate the business of spying, together with a rigorous psychological analysis of the personality and motivation of individuals involved in spying. Somewhat cautiously, we also review the characters created by some of the best known fictional writers of spy stories. And, of course, no book on this subject would be complete without the inclusion of something on technology and gadgets. In this instance, real gadgets; intriguing tools of the trade.

When we started writing, Putin had not launched his full-scale war on Ukraine. He is a product of the KGB. We were able, just before the book went to print, to include a psychological assessment of the man who single-handedly has changed the geopolitical world order. It is not comfortable reading. But we would be hard-pressed to find a more topical subject that relates so directly to the core theme of our book.

Who do you think will be most attracted to reading your book?

As I said, it's a book we have intentionally positioned as an authoritative account of the world of spies and spying. It should be a stimulating, hopefully challenging, read for those involved in intelligence and security, academia and for those who want to write realistic spy fiction. We believe it will be an engaging and revealing insight for everyone fascinated by the world of spies - whether in real life or the fiction of novels and films.

What made you want to be an author?

Adrian has been writing books for decades; for him it's part of his trade as an academic.

My first book was published in 2003 – prompted by the intrigue of the challenge. For many years I have been a trainer, wanting to help people improve their skills and knowledge. The written word is a permanent and disciplined means of helping people.

So, writing is not really a new experience for either of us, but the writing of this book breaks new ground for both of us as authors.

The topic you have chosen on this occasion must have created particular challenges; can you tell us more about them?

Spying is a secretive world. Adrian and I have had privileged access to the real world, so we know a lot about what actually happens there. The challenge was to find open, non-confidential sources that would engage readers but not involve breaking the Official Secrets Act!

Part of the challenge has been to create a book that is on the one hand informative and enlightening but on the other an engaging and absorbing read in its own right. I hope we have achieved this by featuring many real case studies interspersed with interesting, illustrative stories.

What made you decide to self-publish?

Adrian and I have become increasingly irritated by the way our conventional publishers have imposed on us their own requirements and we decided in September 2021 to self-publish with Matador. Our choice of Matador was based on two main factors: 1) the comprehensive range of self-publishing services offered and 2) every indication we would have their assistance and advice throughout.

So far an excellent decision!

What do you enjoy most about writing?

We both enjoy creating books we think are attractive, aesthetically as well as in content. The writing process is creative but it also stimulates new ideas and forces out sloppy thinking.

There is for me great pleasure in searching my vocabulary - and other more erudite sources - to express and describe exactly what I want to impart.

What do you enjoy the least about writing?

Proof-reading! It does not suit either of our personalities. We know we can get others to do it (and we did) but there are aspects only we know about.

When do you like to do your writing?

For me it's in my study at 0700 in the morning. Adrian starts at 0500!

What is your favourite book? And what is your favourite classic title?

We both enjoyed Ben Macintyre's *'The Spy and the Traitor'* partly because we know Oleg Gordievsky, but also because he tells the story so well.

I enjoyed and have referenced Dale Carnegie's *'How to Win Friends and Influence People'* (1936) many times. But my Kindle library is a very eclectic mix. Near the top of my list, in part because I live on a houseboat, is a *'Guide to The Thames and Southern Waterways'*.

What book do you wish you had written and why?

For me it is *'Wuthering Heights'* by Emily Brontë; I'm intrigued by Heathcliff's dark side, and it is of course set in my home county - Yorkshire.

Adrian cites *'My Family and Other Animals'* by Gerald Durrell for its gentle humour and insight into people.

Do you prefer reading printed books, ebooks or audiobooks?

It may not be fashionable among people of my age, but I prefer ebooks. I love being able to take them on a train, read in the sun and not to have to worry about which books to carry. And now the indexing/search function has become more sophisticated it's very easy to navigate around the book.

Adrian likes audiobooks particularly while driving but has never got into ebooks. Brought up on the printed page!

What are your top tips for aspiring writers?

Never underestimate the hard work involved!

It can be quite daunting writing 80,000 words – think of it as 10 x 8,000 word essays.

Find a time and place that works for you. Set clear, realistic goals, targets and priorities. Monitor & record progress. Write fast, revise later. Concentrate on the structure.

Writing is a job like any other. Set targets and achieve them. There are aspects you will enjoy more than others. Don't agonize about little things; don't sweat the small stuff. Find your voice. Don't get obsessed and OCD about grammar. Take breaks from the writing and don't lock yourself away.

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