



Fatal Lies

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Vienna, 1903. In St. Florian's military school, a rambling edifice set high in the hills of the City's famous woods, a young cadet is found dead - his body lacerated with razor wounds. Once again, Inspector Oskar Rheinhardt calls on his friend - and disciple of Freud - Doctor Max Liebermann, to help him with the investigation.

In the closed society of the school, power is everything - and suspicion falls on an elite group of cadets, with a penchant for sadism and dangerous games. When it is discovered that the dead boy was a frequent guest of the deputy headmaster's attractive young wife - other motives for murder suggest themselves.

A tangled web of relationships is uncovered, at the heart of which are St. Florian's dark secrets, which Liebermann, using new psychoanalytic tools such as dream interpretation and the ink-blot test, begins to probe. At the same time, a shocking revelation makes it impossible for Liebermann to pursue the object of his affections, the Englishwoman Miss Lydgate, and he finds himself romantically involved with the passionate and elemental Trezska Novak - a mysterious Hungarian concert violinist, gifted with uncannily accurate intuitions. Again, all is not what it seems, and Liebermann is drawn into the perilous world of espionage - and must make choices, the outcome of which will threaten the entire stability of the Habsburg Empire.

Fatal Lies - volume three of the Liebermann Papers - is about sex, the will to power, and deception.

Fatal Lies Details

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Ellen says

This is the second mystery in this series that I've read, and for some reason this one wasn't quite as interesting as the first one. Takes place at a military school for boys in Germany in the early 1900s, where strange things are happening. Boys are dying, and no one can figure out why the boy whose death started the investigation has died. There is a lot of bullying taking place in this school, and the headmaster appears to be in on it. He's named Eichmann, and in the postscript Tallis tells us that this is a deliberate reference to the Nazi Eichmann. Once again the relationship between the detective and the doctor is well-portrayed, and the two of them need to put their heads together to figure out what has been going on in the school.

Again some historical people figure in this story - Freud, Nietzsche, and more. The key to the entire plot is Nietzsche's "Superman". But if I tell you any more I'll ruin the book for you. Just pick it up at the library and make your way through. You'll enjoy the trip.

Dave says

Not a bad follow-up to the earlier books--I still like the protagonists and the turn-of-the-century Vienna setting. But this one tries to cram too much in--Rorschach blots, "Young Torless," absinthe, Hungarian spies, Mahler, Freud, and the supposed banality of evil. Too much research, and he doesn't write well enough to fully digest it. But still looking forward to more in the series.

Bibliothekerin says

So far I can't get enough of Tallis's Liebermann series.

I don't have time for an in-depth review; I want to read the whole series at one go then read the whole series again. One thing I can say, Tallis gives the reader so much to think about, and much to savor. I LOVE this kind of book.

The only drawback—and it is SERIOUS—is the MESS the e-publisher or printer made of the German language text. Apparently those fatheads think it's unimportant to spell correctly if it's not in English. I was APPALLED at how many mistakes there were. Many were repeats, indicating that the text was poorly scanned. This is completely unacceptable for either printer or publisher, and I hope Tallis has complained. Why should he go to all the trouble of having someone check the accuracy of the German if the bonehead printer destroys it???

I cannot be the first to notice this, so I can hardly believe that the publisher has not reissued this EPUB ebook version with corrections. Why should we—including libraries—pay full price for damaged goods??

Jeanie says

I love these visits to Vienna and the mysteries that get solved, but Max is a bit confused on the dating front and that is a bit tiresome.

Peter says

Another marvel by Frank Tallis! "Fatal Lies" is the third in his "Vienna" series and it shows his increasing skill level in terms of folding multiple story lines into a fascinating read. For those unfamiliar with Tallis, if you like historical fiction, mysteries, psychology and cultural history, Tallis brings it all to bear in each of his novels. His protagonist, Dr. Max Liebermann, a budding psychiatrist, assists his musical partner, detective Oskar Rheinhardt solve crimes by using his intuition coupled with superior powers of observation and reasoning. Fortunately for me, there are three more in the series that I haven't read.

Steven Belanger says

Another successful Max Liebermann novel, #3 in the series. In this one, a young man has been murdered in a military school. Cadets and administrators are suspected, a la A Few Good Men. The guy in charge is named Eichmann, which Tallis had to do on purpose; the most violent cadet is named Wolf. There are clues galore, from hypnotism, from dream interpretation, from basic common sense and noticing when people very obviously lie. There's an unhappy beautiful woman, a rather psychotic master addicted to cocaine--which Freud says is definitely not used for headaches--and there's other assorted malcontents suffering around.

Depending on your tolerance for the weird and arcane, there's also a hillbilly mountain man who scavenges and lurks around. (He's responsible for an out-of-left-field circumstance at the end.) There's a witch he sells stolen things to. There's a beautiful gypsy who isn't who she seems. And, is Ms. Lydgate stepping out on the good doctor? (Why not? The good doctor steps out on her!) And there's a really, really catchy song by Schubert (based on a poem by Goethe) that you must YouTube. This is so necessary, in fact, that I'll do it for you...Okay, I guess I won't, since I can't link in this thing. (You'll have to go to my blog for that.) Anyway, just copy this into your browser:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JS91p...>

It's sort of Rhinehardt's running thematic element, but not Liebermann's. This struck such a chord with me that I'm stealing it for one of my great many WIPs. Apparently this is a famous little ditty, and Schubert apparently wrote over 600 of these things, somehow, though he died at age 31. I Wikipedia-ed Schubert, as you should, too. I mean, the guy was productive, and famous, and apparently not a complete jerk. He did probably die of syphilis--he had mercury poisoning, too; mercury was used a lot to treat syphilis at the time--but, then, so many of the famous of 1900 or so died of that. Including Nietzsche, by the way, who also plays a small role in this book. His teachings of the *Übermensch* get misunderstood yet again!

Anyway, I digress. (Big-time.) Though a couple of books in this series purposely closed the main plotline before the novel's end, this one closed it a long time before the end, about 85 pages. This sat less well with me, as it may with you, but it wasn't a complete breaker. The subplots, including the bit with the gypsy and the mystery surrounding Ms. Lydgate's mysterious man, plus tying up a few loose ends at the military school, take up those 85 pages. You may be most interested in whether a cadet will get caught for the murder of another cadet, as I did. Don't. You'll be disappointed. More than anything else, the tying up of that loose end, with the aloof woodsman and the body of that cadet--that's something I wish Tallis had handled differently.

Overall the book is worth your time. Not one of my favorites from the series--that's Vienna Twilight--but it's still a lot better than most of the stuff in this genre. Another plus, as usual, is that you'll want to YouTube stuff to listen to, and Wikipedia stuff to learn about, and by now that kind of thing goes with these books as much as Liebermann and Rheinhardt do. For me, anyway.

Sara says

Zelenka, a Czech scholarship boy, dies at St. Florian's military academy near Aufkirchen, seemingly of natural causes, but Rheinhardt suspects foul play even before the history of bullying at the school comes to light. This is Rheinhardt's book - the parallel between his struggle for parity with Von Bulow, his well-born "superior," and the conflict between the well-born boys of St. Florian's and the poor scholarship boys, ties the book together.

Liebermann has an important role in interviewing witnesses and suspects, using ink blots to tease out what they are not willing to verbalize. In rescuing a Hungarian violinist from rape, he stumbles into a liaison which has unexpected consequences -- but the book still belongs to Rheinhardt and the boys.

Nietzsche's writings overshadow the school, his ideology infecting certain teachers as well as one particular boy, clever in evading suspicion, who becomes the leader of a bullying pack. Tallis masterfully conveys the boys' personalities, weaknesses, beliefs and strengths and enables understanding of victims and victimized in equal measure. The teachers who preach Nietzsche's views are revealed as foolishly unaware of how their best students may enact such maxims as this one: "I can be judge of myself -- and avenger of my law."

Tallis has written a page-turner which does not sacrifice forward plot motion in its pursuit of depth. The inspiration for this book was Robert Musil's *The Confusions of Young Torless*, finished in 1905, and "a chilling exploration of the origins of fascism." Tallis's book is chilling, to say the least, but Musil's is next on my list. Tallis's afterword moves past Arendt's thesis of the "banality of evil" to introduce the more recent concept that "people commit atrocities because they believe what they are doing is right." "Brutality is one of the things that human beings employ to make the world a simpler place."

Kátia Cristina says

I'm in love with this new series. Already started number 4. Dr. Liebermann is the new Sherlock Holmes!

James says

It was, in part, the inspiration of Robert Musil's novella, *The Confusions of Young Torless*, about a young cadet struggling toward self-definition while experiencing the erotic tensions of puberty, that led Frank Tallis to write the mystery novel *Fatal Lies*.

The heart of the mystery is the machinations a small group of cadets led by Kiefer Wolf, a precocious underclassman. They are attending a private boys' school, Saint Florian, that is replete with ancient traditions and eccentric teachers. It is this story line that draws on Musil's novella most directly with the addition of explicit Nietzschean influences on young Wolf. But the key to the success of Tallis' novel is his intelligent use of the setting of fin-de-siecle Vienna and the blend of medicine, music, psychology and history that

makes this a satisfying read. The lead detective, Reinhardt and his ally, Dr. Max Liebermann, an expert in the new psychiatric methods of Sigmund Freud, are both intelligent and believable characters in this well-constructed mystery. Each of the main characters must deal with their own issues and their stories are only slightly less interesting than the primary mystery. I was eagerly apprehensive most of the novel as the plot and sub-plots moved forward with alacrity. The climax was also satisfying; So much so that I look forward to reading Tallis' two previous mysteries (also set in Vienna).

Leslie says

Not a fan of the plot in the school setting (which was a majority of the book). Only because I feel like I've read too many school bully/prep school clique stories lately.

Anne says

3.5 stars. I don't know what it is about mystery novelists and military schools—the former seem irresistibly drawn to the latter. Since this author is Frank Tallis, his book is a bit more complex than most, with an unrelated subplot involving romance and spies. Nevertheless, there's a lot that is predictable here: the hostility of the rich boys to the poorer ones, the bullying, the homosexuality. I found Tallis's postscript entitled "The Banality of Evil," putting one of the themes of the book into context, interesting. But I'm glad he's gotten military schools out of his system and can move on.

Julia says

It took me a while to get through this book and I'm not sure why as it was actually a great Agatha Christie style thriller with this fab doctor solving everything! You weren't sure at first a) whether all strands of the story were relevant and/or b) whether all of the strands would come together but they did and it was really good. Having recently been to Vienna it felt more atmospheric too! All in all a good book :)

Janet says

Oh no, not another series! I picked this up and started reading it without realizing it is part of a series and this is number 3. Unfortunately, I liked it enough that I will have to go back and read 1 and 2, this on top of the series by P.D. James that contains 14 in all. Oh yeah, and Storm picked up book #13 in the Janet Evanovich Plum series, not to mention the Maeve Binchy books I got during one of our book exchanges and Nicole has got me thinking I might enjoy some Stephen King again. Looks like I've got some serious reading to do.

As for the book, it takes place in early 20th century Vienna, the protagonist being one Max Liebermann, a psychiatrist of the Freudian persuasion and friend of a police detective with whom he often collaborates on cases. Great references to turn-of-the century Austria, German and Austrian composers and their music, works by philosophers (Nietsche figuring prominently in this book) and scientists, and of course Freud's theories.

Phil says

This is another very fine Tallis Victorian, turn of the century mystery novel involving Dr. Max Liebermann, a Freudian psychiatrist, and Detective Inspector Oskar Reinhardt as they work to solve the death of a young boy at a prestigious military school.

The school known for its ability to turn out excellent military students is also known for its brutality and merciless treatment of the younger boys. This is the real story that attracted the author as he state in his “Dossier: Fatal Lies” at the end of the book. The idea came from a memoir of a student who lived through such a scenario. The question he deals with is the “banality of evil” as Hannah Arendt called it.

What makes ordinary people do such horrible things? From studies he quotes research....

“Rather both studies (and also historical evidence) suggest that brutality occurs when people identify strongly with brutal groups that have a brutal ideology.”

He goes on to say in the Dossier, “How is it that ordinary people can be persuaded to do terrible things? A better question would be: What are the factors that cause ordinary people to identify with brutal belief systems? In the modern world, the answer to this question is needed with some urgency.”

This is never more so than in America today.

This was an excellent novel ending with an equally excellent analysis.

Heni Purwati Akbar says

I'm very satisfied ?
