

La Disparition de Josef Mengele
“The Disappearance of Josef Mengele”

Olivier Guez

August 2017, 240 pages



Longlisted for Prix Goncourt, Prix Renaudot, Prix Interallié and Prix Medici
Shortlisted for Prix Landerneau

After a 30-year manhunt, Josef Mengele, the torturing doctor of Auschwitz, and one of Nazism’s most emblematic figures, died in South America under mysterious circumstances. This powerful, geopolitical thriller is the result of an in-depth investigation of perhaps the Third Reich’s most secretive man, and portrays the captivating deconstruction of the myth behind “the Angel of Death.” It invites readers to explore the depths of evil.

Hiding behind several different pseudonyms, protected by networks and his family’s money, and supported by a community in Buenos Aires that still dreams of a founding a Fourth Reich, Mengele believes he can invent a new life for himself... In Germany, it is a time of reconstruction. Peron’s Argentina is benevolent. And the entire world simply wants to forget. But soon the chase is on again, first by the Mossad, then by Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal. With the help of sympathizers, Mengele finds temporary refuge in a remote farm in Brazil. From then on, he will never have a moment’s rest. He survives through paranoia, but becomes the claustrophobic prisoner of his own hopeless situation. He will eventually be found dead, having drowned on a beach along the Brazilian coast.

How could the SS doctor possibly slip through the cracks of an international investigation spanning three decades? What complicity was there between West Germany and South America, and how did he benefit from it? This untold and disturbing story shines a light on geopolitical mutations, the way historical perspectives change, and the process by which the world learned about the Holocaust. Here, Nazi atrocities overlap with the modernity of the 1960s and 1970s, leaving us with our Western ambiguities. And with the question: What do we do with men who have committed acts of evil?

This highly anticipated book recounts Josef Mengele’s terrifying odyssey through South America – a place where former Nazis, Mossad agents, greedy women and dictators make their way in a world corrupted by fanaticism, money, and ambition.

Olivier Guez is a writer, journalist, and screenwriter. He has published a number of works, including *L’impossible retour, une histoire des juifs en Allemagne depuis 1945* (2007), *Eloge de l’esquive* (2014) and *Les Révolutions de Jacques Koskas* (2014). He is a regular contributor to *Le Monde*, *Le Point*, *The New York Times* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*. In 2016, he received the German Film Award for Best Screenplay, for the film *The People vs. Fritz Bauer*.

Foreign rights sold: Chinese (simplified: Haitian), Dutch (Meulenhoff Boekerij), German (Aufbau Verlag), Greek (Kritiki), Italy (Neri Pozza) and Lithuanian (Zara). Under offer in Romania.

“*La Disparition de Josef Mengele* is, without a doubt, *the* page-turner of the season – even if it sometimes feels like it is sinking into darkness... An exofiction, or faction, or ‘non-fiction novel’ is not just some trend but, instead, a way to deconstruct history and help us look truth in the face. Olivier Guez has taken an already well known story, and created a fantastically new novel.” Frédéric Beigbeder in *Le Figaro Magazine*

“*La Disparition de Josef Mengele* will leave no reader unscathed. The character remains hateable. Yet, by refusing to caricature him as a monster, by using fiction to transcend reality, by insisting on his mediocrity, his anxieties and his irascibility, Olivier Guez offers a superb biography on Evil incarnate.” *L’Humanité Dimanche*

HIGHLIGHT