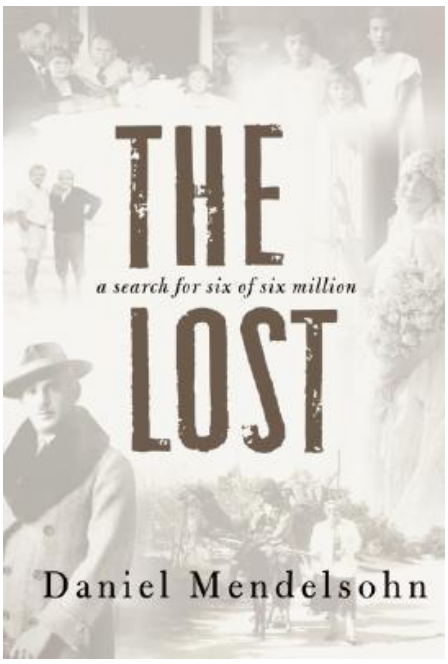

The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million

Daniel Mendelsohn

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In this rich and riveting narrative, a writer's search for the truth behind his family's tragic past in World War II becomes a remarkably original epic—part memoir, part reportage, part mystery, and part scholarly detective work—that brilliantly explores the nature of time and memory, family and history.

The Lost begins as the story of a boy who grew up in a family haunted by the disappearance of six relatives during the Holocaust—an unmentionable subject that gripped his imagination from earliest childhood. Decades later, spurred by the discovery of a cache of desperate letters written to his grandfather in 1939 and tantalized by fragmentary tales of a terrible betrayal, Daniel Mendelsohn sets out to find the remaining eyewitnesses to his relatives' fates. That quest eventually takes him to a dozen countries on four continents, and forces him to confront the wrenching discrepancies between the histories we live and the stories we tell. And it leads him, finally, back to the small Ukrainian town where his family's story began, and where the solution to a decades-old mystery awaits him.

Deftly moving between past and present, interweaving a world-wandering odyssey with childhood memories of a now-lost generation of immigrant Jews and provocative ruminations on biblical texts and Jewish history, *The Lost* transforms the story of one family into a profound, morally searching meditation on our fragile hold on the past. Deeply personal, grippingly suspenseful, and beautifully written, this literary tour de force illuminates all that is lost, and found, in the passage of time.

The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million Details

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From Reader Review The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million for online ebook

Jonfaith says

There may just be a vertical hierarchy in our popular understanding of the Holocaust. At the top, however uneasy, are the Survivors: it is through their testimony that we know to never forget. Their is also a measure of merit in having outwitted or simply survived the minatory machinations of the Nazis. below them are the victims, particularly present when the doltish ask "why they went like sheep, why they didn’t fight back, why they didn’t heed the signs in the 1930s?" Below that mound of evidence is nefarious mass of perpetrators, willing executioners, ordinary men, the devil incarnate and the betrayers.

If only life was that fucking simple.

Mr. Mendelson constructs a marvelous investigation sixty years after the fact. His training as a classicist lends a unique angle to his research. The idea of using Dido as an apt metaphor is astonishing: victim and exile, she prospers from her wits only to kill herself. If ever an example antiicpated the Survivor, this is it.

JimS says

This is one of the most excruciatingly haunting books I've ever read. It is marvelously told, the story of Daniel Mendelsohn searching for details -- specifics! -- on how six members of his family were "killed by the Nazis" during the Holocaust -- "killed by the Nazis" being about the only information he started with. This is so much more than a detective story. It's an Odyssey. Mendelsohn is a classicist by profession, and his storytelling is a loving adaption (adoption?) of Homer. But it's also more than that. There are stories within stories within stories, twists and turns, seemingly endless tales and endless sentences, and toward the end, a page turner that delivers a final knockout punch. One of those stories is the one about the grandfather he loves, whose story telling style Mendelsohn replicates in the structure of the book. It took me a long time to click into the story because the first part winds and winds and doesn't seem to make much progress. But somewhere in the second half, things pick up, and it becomes clear why the set-up was as long-winded as it was. Did I say there is a parallel, Biblical story line embedded within the detective Odyssey? Without giving too much away, the moral questions in the Biblical sections dovetail with the moral questions that come up -- some of which are too unbearable even to mention so Mendelsohn doesn't, but they are there nonetheless -- in thinking about who did what to whom and why during the Holocaust. A very large theme is what family members do to one another, and considering that some of it is every bit terrible on a small scale as genocide is on a large scale, what is the meaning of family anyway? There also is a subtext about Mendelsohn himself and a long suppressed childhood event that seems to have launched him on his quest to always look back.

I had this book on my shelf also for family reasons. My maternal grandmother was from the same part of the world -- Gallicia -- that the people Mendelsohn was searching lived and died. This is most likely the reason my aunt picked up this book and recommended it to me. So this tale is close to home in a distant kind of way. In any event, this is well worth the time and perseverance it may take to wind through the briars to get to the promised land.

Chequers says

Bello, bello, bello, ed anche tanto doloroso.
Se dovessi fare un parallelo fra un libro ed un film, questo sarebbe paragonato a "Il pianista" di Polanski, dove vedi, anzi "senti" tutto l'orrore della Shoah senza vedere cadaveri nudi ammucchiati nei campi, come nei documentari russi, americani o inglesi.
L'autore, Daniel, e'un americano di religione ebraica che vuole sapere che fine ha fatto il fratello del nonno, di cui si sussurra appena il suo nome e quello della sua famiglia: ovviamente si intuisce che sono stati tutti ammazzati dai nazisti ma dove e quando?
Daniel quindi parte alla ricerca di informazioni e si spostera' in Europa, in Israele e fino in Australia per sapere qualche cosa di piu' sui parenti, e scoprira' ovviamente tante cose orribili.
La scrittura di Mendelsohn e' fluida e piacevolissima, in effetti il libro si legge come fosse un giallo e personalmente non riuscivo a staccarmene: mi sentivo quasi in colpa perche' mi sembrava di mancare di rispetto a tutti i morti della Shoah poiche' stavo leggendo troppo avidamente, non so se riesco a spiegare quello che voglio dire.
Da far leggere nelle scuole.

Barbara Wahl says

Dare un'ultima occhiata
Al termine delle sue settecento pagine, degli anni di ricerche, dei viaggi lontani, frequenti, ripetuti nel tentativo di carpire qualche brandello della storia svanita dello scomparso suo prozio, Mendelshon scrive:
"Da una parte esiste l'infinita gamma di possibilità dovute al caso, al tempo, allo stato d'animo, l'inconoscibile e sterminata massa di eventi che costituiscono la vita di un individuo o di un popolo; dall'altra in questo incredibile e illimitato universo di fattori e possibilità, si intersecano la personalità e la volontà individuale, le decisioni, la capacità di operare distinzioni, quindi di creare, perseverare; l'impulso costante di tornare a dare un'ultima occhiata (...) Al mondo esiste una sconfinata massa di cose e l'atto della creazione opera una scissione attraverso di esse, separando i fatti dalle supposizioni. [...] Perché tutto, infine, va perduto: (...) ogno cosa andrà irremediabilmente perduta, le gambe ben tornite, la sordità, l'incedere deciso con cui quella persona scendeva dal treno con una pila di libri di scuola, i segreti di famiglia e le ricette dei dolci, degli stufati e del gotaki, la bontà e la malvagità, le azioni di coloro che salvarano vite e di coloro che tradirono: alla fine tutto, assolutamente tutto naufragherà nell'oblio, come la civilità degli egiziani, degli incas, degli ittiti. Eppure, nel breve periodo qualcosa può essere salvato, se solo, di fronte all'immensità dell'esistenza, qualcuno deciderà di guardarsi indietro, di dare un'ultima occhiata, di cercare tra le rovine del passato per recuperare il possibile, incurante di ciò che è andato perduto."
Da queste parole trarrò la perseveranza, la forza di volgere quell'ultimo sguardo, quello che trasforma in statua di sale chi si lascia ammaliare dalla nostalgia e in testimone chi cerca, scava, riporta, racconta quello che ha intravisto.

Abby says

The two teenage girls at the right in the back row in this picture are my paternal grandmother and her sister. Their parents and grandfather are in the front row. The picture was taken around 1900. A few years later, my grandmother, rebellious and politically inclined, left the small town in Poland and came, alone, to the United States. She was one of the very few members of her family to escape the Holocaust.

Like many American Jews, I don't know precisely what happened to my relatives. Daniel Mendelsohn didn't know what happened to six members of his family who he heard spoken of in hushed tones as a child. His effort to find out took many years and took him all over the world in a frantic effort to interview eyewitnesses before they died.

The story he tells in this book is both personal and common to millions of people. It is beautifully written, sometimes tedious, often suspenseful, always heartbreaking and indispensable in commemorating what has been lost.

Laura says

Just arrived from France through BM.

What happened to Shmiel Jäger, his wife Ester and their four beautiful girls? Emigrants to their relatives in America, they died at the beginning of the occupation of Galicia by the Germans denounced by their good Polish. Born in 1960, Daniel Mendelsohn, nephew of Shmiel has always doubted the official version, and from his childhood, began searching for the truth. This book is both the result 'of a life of inquiry, and the story of the investigation itself.

This is not an easy reading since the author makes uses of long paragraphs. His prose also reminds Proust's in "À la recherché du temps perdu." A huge research work was mande by the author, no doubt about it.

Ruth says

This is listed as being a “New York Times Bestseller.” One would think that I should have had my fill of Holocaust stories, but apparently not, as this one jumped into my hand at Borders even though I hadn’t known of its existence. It’s not an easy read. Mendelsohn never used one comma in a sentence where he could insert three or four. I was often lost in sentences wandering through parenthetical phrase after parenthetical phrase until I had to back up and take them out in turn in order to tack the beginning of the sentence onto the end and make some sense of the thing.

It also included large sections in italics which expounded on Jewish history and religion, and where Mendelsohn apparently endeavored to draw parallels between his story and legendary Jewish lore. I say endeavored because I soon gave up on reading them. I found the interruption of these units intolerable in a story that was moving all too slowly to begin with, what with its innumerable musings on history and the psychology of remembrance. Besides, I find it difficult to read great blocks of italics.

This book had a fascinating story to tell, but the author badly needed an editor. The path to finding out what happened to his great uncle when he was killed by the Nazis was a long one, with many doublings-back and

crisscrosses, enough to confuse and tire even the most persistent reader. He had many interesting things to say about the nature of memory and stories, but I tired of hearing him say them again and again, and again.

Marina Deus says

rigoroso. exigente.doloroso. meigo. às vezes desgastante.

Carla says

“A toda essa distância, ao fim de todos aqueles anos e ali estava ela, sentada à mesa comigo, ali estava ele, a conversar comigo ao telefone, ali estavam eles, ali andavam eles se soubéssemos onde encontrá-los: recordando-os.” (P.167)

Ester, Bronia e Schmiel Jäger

Kay McAdams says

This books takes patience and is not a quick read, but it is well worth the effort. The author makes fascinating use of the Torah to help us understand his journey into his family's past. It is a book that leaves you exhausted-- this wasn't easy to write, and I have great respect for that. The title suggests that it's about searching for the fate of 6 specific Holocaust victims, but it's about so much more than that-- memory, human nature, knowing and history, surviving after Surviving, family, how we "know" those around us. Again, fascinating.

S. says

This book is sad and beautiful and riveting. The story itself isn't unusual since the fate of this family was the fate of many European Jews in the Holocaust. But the author pursues the story with such loving care, and the uncovering of what happened is handled almost unbearably well. I also enjoyed how the author wove in philology/etymology and biblical reference. I loved it. I cried all over it. I forced it on my mother.

Leanna says

My cousin, who I have never been close to, lent me The Lost: A Search for Six of Six Million on her recent visit to France. At the time, she had no idea how interested in this book I would be.

The memoir recounts Daniel Mendelsohn’s search for information about the lives and deaths of his great

uncle and his family. His journey starts with only one sure fact: his Uncle Shmiel and family were killed during the Nazi occupation of eastern Poland (now Ukraine).

As a Ukraine-phile, I was particularly interested that from his childhood, Mendelsohn's grandfather (Uncle Shmiel's brother) teaches him that Ukrainians are the worst people alive—much worse than the Nazis themselves. Yet, when he returns to his family's ancestral village, Mendelsohn discovers the Ukrainians there are kind and gracious.

These sections resonate with me as I, too, struggle with similar feelings (though, of course, not on such a personal level as Mendelsohn). How can I love Ukraine so much knowing many Ukrainians collaborated with the Nazis?

I had an epiphany as I read Mendelsohn's hypothesis that both Ukrainians and Jews, at this time, are at the bottom of the food chain. As such, the two groups struggle to gain ground on each other. For example, when the Russians are in power, the Jewish community is relieved because they alleviate some of its suffering. Yet, the Ukrainians are tortured at the Russian's hands. Conversely, when the Germans take over, the Ukrainians are happy, while the Jews suffer unimaginably.

I read this section, had my epiphany, on a flight from Slovakia to France and found myself weeping on the plane.

Yet, the book also includes graphic accounts of Ukrainian abuse that is simply irreconcilable. I found myself constantly shaking my head as I read descriptions of torture—of children smashed against rocks and men's eyes cut out. I instinctively tried to shake these images from my mind.

Although the book is long, over 500 pages, and often meanders and is repetitive, I found myself completely invested in knowing for myself what happened to Uncle Shmiel, his wife, and four daughters.

Yet, I also had a sense that Mendelsohn is disingenuous in some of his writing. For example, he shares a family narrative about his great aunt being sold into marriage. Yet, in an earlier book, Mendelsohn writes about discovering this family story is not true. He never shares this fact with the readers of The Lost. I finished the book, then, wondering if what Mendelsohn left out of the book is just as important as what he includes.

Takisx says

Ε?μαι υπερβολικ?ς το ξ?ρω, αλλ? ε?ναι αριστο?ργημα. Πρ?ν 5 χρ?νια ?ταν το χα ξαναξεκιν?σει, με ε?χε κουρ?σει, και το παρ?τησα. Τ?ρα, με την δ?καιη ανακατανομ? που δ?νει ? χρ?νος, μου δ?νει το δικα?ωμα να το λατρ?ψω. Καταρχ?ν σου δ?νει την ψευδα?σθηση ο,τι ε?σαι εκε? δ?πλα κι ακο?ς, κι οχι ο,τι διαβ?ζεις. Επειτα, σου μιλ?ει για τη ζω? σου. Για τη μν?μη, που ε?ναι κ?ρβουνο και με λ?γη καλ? θ?ληση, γ?νεται διαμ?ντι. Για τους ανθρ?πους που δεν αλλ?ζουν, οσο κι αν το προσπαθ?σουν, κι ο,τι για ολα φτα?ει το παρελθ?ν που δεν αλλ?ζει, οσο κι αν το ρετουσ?ρεις, και τ?λος το πιο σημαντικ?: αυτ? που σου αν?κει, ερχεται με ενα μαγικ? τρ?πο και σε βρ?σκει. Αρκε? να χεις μ?τια ανοιχτ? για να το δε?ς.

Kristen says

A friend of mine gave me her copy of this book, telling me I should read it because of the intimacy my own life has had in recent years to the Holocaust. My boyfriend's grandparents were both Holocaust survivors who emigrated to the US after the war.

The book focuses on one man's search to find out more about 'the lost,' six members of his family (an aunt, uncle, and four cousins) who perished in the war, but no one knows exactly how. He travels to multiple countries over several years interviewing Jews from his family's tiny town in what is now Ukraine. The similarities between this man's family and what I know of the experiences of my boyfriend's family were in many cases eerily and s unsettlingly similar.

You have to work at reading this book -- it's nearly 600 pages -- and the subject matter and prose can sometimes make you feel like you're hardly making any headway. It's not a quick read, but by the end you feel an intimacy with the author. You wish you could just call him up and talk to him about his experiences. I think anyone who is interested in the Holocaust, or can appreciate the journey of trying to discover more about your family and your heritage, will enjoy reading this book.

Chelsea says

A beautifully written, evocative book. Dense, full of tangents, and telling the story of several generations across several continents.

Mendelsohn is the self-appointed family historian who, after an entire childhood of listening to his grandfather's stories, decides to find out what happened to the family members who were left out - his grandfather's brother, his wife, and their four daughters, who were "killed by the Nazis". With little more to go on (when he begins his search, he was unsure even of the daughters' names and birth order), his five year investigation into the lost branch of his family took him all across Europe, to Australia, Israel, and back.

He did a wonderful job telling not only the story of the lost family members, but also his grandfather's story, the story of a small town in Eastern Poland, the story of the early chapters of the Torah, and, finally, his own story of how they all intertwine. He writes the book to reflect his grandfather's style of "Chinese box" storytelling, where a broad, meandering tale slowly comes into focus, just in time for the punchline or the tragedy that brings it all together.

Part memoir, part biography, part biblical study, part history, part mystery, part tragedy, it's a powerful, non-judgmental look at a complicated time in our history and what it meant for his family.

Marianna Evenstein says

Wow, what a moving read. This book totally reminded me of my own family history, and my own desire to re-connect with and reconstruct a world that has been almost completely lost with the generation of people who lived through the Holocaust. But this is not just another book about the Holocaust -- it's a book about

the nature of memory and storytelling, about how our history determines who we are in the present and who we will become in the future. Nevertheless, I can imagine that this is not necessarily a book that will appeal to everyone -- there are a lot of references to Jewish religious tradition and culture that takes a certain kind of interest, or the patience to learn about it. Still, this love that went into researching and writing this book is so evident, and that, I think, can touch just about anyone.

Marci says

So, I just officially finished my book, The Lost, yesterday (big cheers for me!) and thought I'd let you know what I thought about it...I will start with what I didn't like. It was long (500 pages – a lot for me at this point in my life!) and as I mentioned earlier a little slow at the beginning. There was a lot of detailed discussion on various stories of the Torah which was interesting at first but by the last 50 pages I had begun skipping over to go straight to the actual storyline. Overall, however, I found the book quite fascinating. I thought it was amazing that at such an early age the author became so obsessed with his family history. He wrote letters to distant aunts and uncles and had a running letter correspondence with his grandfather trying to find out what they remembered about his uncle and his family (who as I mentioned before all he really knew at first was "had been killed by the Nazis"), and interestingly enough he still didn't find out all he could have before many of them died because he didn't yet know what questions to ask. The curiosity eventually becomes a quest to know everything he can know about this family (his Uncle Shmiel, Aunt Ester and their 4 daughters) and takes him all around the world searching out the surviving Jews from the small town of Bolechow (he mentions how many had survived the Holocaust and I believe it was only around 30) to interview and try to piece the story of their lives back together again. One of my favorite thoughts coming from the book was toward the end when the author describes what we tend to think of losing as the result of these mass genocides or of any death really..."We tend, naturally to think first of the people themselves, the families that will cease existing, the children that will never be born; and then of the homely things with which most of us are familiar, the houses and mementoes and photographs that, because those people no longer exist, will stop having any meaning at all. But there is this too: the thoughts that will never be thought, the discoveries that will never be made, the art that will never be created. The problems, written in a book somewhere, a book that will outlive the people who wrote down the problems, that will never be solved." The author did an excellent job at presenting his story in a way that makes you think about the Holocaust from a totally different perspective that we are used to and for that I would recommend it...just don't give up after the first 50 pages!

Lissa says

I've been meaning to read this book for a decade now, ever since it came out and my European history professor from college emailed me. "I highly recommend this book," he said, "if you think you can get through it. Don't push yourself; the book can wait. But it is THAT GOOD." He wasn't insinuating that I didn't have the ability to read the book, that the vocabulary would be too much for me to grasp or that I wouldn't be able to make it through six hundred pages. Instead, he was concerned about my emotional ability to handle the content.

At that time, I was in the middle of conducting my own search - a search for twelve, all who perished in the Shoah (Holocaust), my grandmother's entire family. Only my grandmother "survived," although she hates

being called a "survivor" because, as she says, she wasn't *there*. She had been sent away by her twice-widowed mother to England, a part of the *Kindertransport*, where she would stay until the end of the war, mostly (and, perhaps, blissfully) unaware of what was happening to her family, until the end, when it became brutally clear that she was the only one left. (She did manage to find a few cousins who survived and later moved to Israel, and another cousin who survived and decided to stay in Germany, and one of her uncles, her father's much older brother, whom she met once, emigrated to America before the war happened. But, essentially, the rest of her family was completely wiped from the face of the earth.)

So, yes, my former college professor was right to caution me, in his ever-exuberant way. He was the one, after all, who helped me with my search in college and afterward. So for years the book sat upon my shelf, and I always said "this year, I'm going to read it." But I never did. There was too much going on; I was too depressed to find out about another Jewish family, unrelated to mine and yet had suffered a similar fate; I was done with Shoah memoirs for a while, maybe forever (that'll never happen, no matter how many times I tell myself that "this one is the last one"); I wanted to read something that wasn't a tragedy.

And then, suddenly, it was the right time. It's been several years since I found any new information about my family; the trail has long gone cold, and although I do a half-hearted search every so often to see if anything new has popped up, I don't put my whole self into it anymore. They're all dead. I will never know them. And the nightmares that inevitably come when I think about them a great deal are...unpleasant, shall we say.

And this book did produce nightmares; don't get me wrong. But it was rather cathartic, in a way, to read this book, to cry and rage and feel all of the feelings.

Mendelsohn's grandfather left Bolechow, Poland before the war (and subsequent near-annihilation of Polish Jewry). He had one brother, Schmiel, who had also emigrated to America but had, unlike Mendelsohn's grandfather, returned to Bolechow. There he married and had four daughters, while he brought the family's butcher shop back to prominence. None of Schmiel's family survived the war.

Growing up, Mendelsohn heard varied stories of "the lost," of Schmiel and his family. But the stories were different and almost impossible to track down, at that time. As the author grew older, the need to know what happened to Schmiel and his family grew, until he found himself crossing the globe in search of answers, from America to Australia to Poland to Denmark to Sweden. Along the way, he finds much more than he ever expected to find, as well as coming to the realization that finding all of the details about what happened is impossible, especially with so few survivors who are still living.

Mehndelsohn's writing style is different. He tends to be rather "poetic," I suppose I would say, and he is damned fond of run-on sentences. He also expresses, early in the book, a love for how the Greeks (and how his grandfather) told stories - long and winding, with lots of asides in between that, eventually, make sense, but it might be a long way down the road. There were times that I had to read paragraphs several times (often the "paragraph" was just one long run-on sentence) in order for them to make sense. But the story is worth it, and I urge you to persevere.

If you need absolute closure, where you know everything about the major players introduced in the book, once again, this probably isn't for you. It always amazes me when I talk to people about the Shoah, how most think that we have a date and a time and a method of execution for every family member. Some even believe that we had bodies to bury! No, there are still numerous unexcavated mass graves in Poland, the Ukraine, etc, etc. And many bodies were burned, so they are only ashes now. As you can see from my own list of family members who died in the Shoah (below), I only have years. Only for one (my great-grandfather, who was the only NOT killed because of his ethnicity, although he was also Jewish) do I know, in so many

words, exactly what happened to him. And the same holds true for Mendelsohn - he knows some details, and he can make some educated guesses, but in the end, what happened is so hazy. As numerous survivors told him, if we KNEW what exactly had happened, we wouldn't be here to talk to you, because we would be dead too.

Another thing that Mendelsohn talks about is the near absolute destruction of Polish (and European) Jewry. I remember talking to someone while I was in college and she was like, "well Hitler didn't win, the Jews are still around!" And yes, we are still around. But we are, for the most part, not "around" in places where, a hundred years ago, there were thriving, close-knit communities in Europe. We are in Israel, America, Australia, etc. Mendelsohn spoke to a few "last Jew of [insert town]," where one lone man or woman is the last living Jew in that area. The Nazis (and their local collaborators, who were numerous) managed to wipe out 90% of Polish Jews. Just imagine that. 90%. And the 10% of survivors? Well, most of them didn't want to return to the area where they had once lived, with their families murdered and their murderers often being the very neighbors that they had once smiled at in the streets and, perhaps, even been friends with, once upon a time. One of the most moving "scenes" for me, I think, was when Mendelsohn visits Prague and the "New Jewish Cemetery," which was a vast tract of land purchased before the Shoah, next to the "Old Jewish Cemetery." The Old Jewish Cemetery is packed with graves, so much so that it motivated the city's Jewish population to buy land to expand it (hence being the "New" Cemetery). That New Jewish Cemetery is virtually barren. There are very few graves there. Why? Because most of the Jews who had expected to be buried there were buried in unmarked mass graves or shipped off to concentration and extermination camps. And their descendants, if they survived, are mostly not in Prague any longer, and will have no need of a cemetery in a foreign land.

As Mendelsohn wrote, "It makes you realize that the Holocaust wasn't something that simply happened, but is an event that's still happening." The repercussions from the Shoah are like so many rings in a pond after you've thrown in a stone. Six million were killed, yes. But many more millions were never born because their would-be parents were murdered. Imagine the art, the books, the literature, the scientific breakthroughs that are missing now from the world. The recipes, the family stories, the picture albums of long dead relatives - all gone, or nearly so. My grandmother, for example, for decades, has been having me try to find a recipe for a dish her mother used to make. I've found a few online, but they don't taste exactly like what she remembers. That recipe is gone. And the family stories, the lullabyes that would have been passed along to my grandmother's children (and perhaps to me), the inside jokes...those are gone, too. I feel that missing piece in the world whenever I think about it, about them.

So yes, for those of us who are descendants of survivors, the wound can still burn. For the survivors themselves? The wound is still raw and bleeding for many of them. I look at my grandmother, who was sent away so young that she barely remembers her half-brothers and half-sister. She has one memory of her father, who was killed when she was barely four. There are "personality traits" that she has - her diagnosed OCD, her absolute need for order and lists, the emotional distance that she has with nearly everyone in her life - that I wonder would be there if she had grown up, happy and carefree, with her siblings and both living parents (or even her mother), instead of at the mercy of strangers (who, she will freely admit, were nothing but kind to her, and whom she kept in regular contact until their deaths; and she kept in touch with their children, as well, until their deaths) where the world that she knew, as she felt, could be taken away from her in an instant. And there is her almost hatred for the French and the Poles (never trust a Pole, I remember her saying to me when I was a small child, they'll stab you in the back AND front), which feels strange, I must admit, considering that she doesn't share the same hatred for Germans (*I'm* German, she'll proclaim when I question her idiosyncrasy, I can't hate *myself*. [Her father was German and her mother was Polish, although my grandmother was born and raised in Germany. She did, however, make a few trips to visit her much-older half-siblings, all of whom still lived in Poland except for the youngest, David, who was still a teenager

when his mother married my great-grandfather, and moved to Germany.]) Mendelsohn addresses this in the book, too; it seems that it's not just one of my grandmother's "quirks," but something that is not uncommon with survivors.

(view spoiler)

I'd highly recommend this book, but do be prepared for an emotional rollercoaster.

May their memories be a blessing:
My great-grandfather, political prisoner (Communist), murdered in 1933
My great-grandmother, deported from France in 1942 (where she fled, probably feeling that she would be safer there than in Germany), presumably gassed immediately upon arrival at Auschwitz due to age/health
My great-uncle David, deported from France in 1942 (who fled from Germany to France with his mother), presumably gassed or otherwise killed in Auschwitz, exact year unknown (perhaps 1942, perhaps later)
My great-uncle Josef, as well as his son and daughter, deported to Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, presumably all deported to Treblinka (if they survived the Ghetto and deportation), where they would have been gassed upon arrival, in 1942
My great-uncle Wolf (or Rolf), last known location in 1939 of Lodz (Poland), fate unknown
My great-aunt Malke, husband Yitzhak, and their four children, deported to Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, presumably all deported to Treblinka (if they survived the Ghetto and deportation), where they would have been gassed upon arrival, in 1942

Lori says

The best thing I read last year. It took me many months to finish this book as I would get overwhelmed by the detail, but I always felt compelled to pick it back up after a breather and continue. This book made the holocaust real for me in a way nothing else, including the Washington D.C museum, has. Brilliant the way Mendelhsson addresses the vast scale of the holocaust while at the same time narrowing it down to individual people who are not heroes or villians, but a regular family like anyone else.

João Carlos says

"Estar vivo é ter uma história para contar. Estar vivo é, precisamente, ser o herói, o centro de uma história de vida. Quando não se pode ser mais nada além de uma personagem secundária na história de alguém, isso significa que se está verdadeiramente morto." (Pág. 480)

“Os Desaparecidos – À procura de seis em seis milhões” é um livro de não-ficção escrito pelo jornalista, crítico e escritor norte-americano **Daniel Mendelsohn** (n. 1960), editado em 2006 e que recebeu inúmeros prémios literários, com destaque para o **National Book Critics Circle Awrad**.
”Há algum tempo, teria eu seis, ou sete, ou mesmo oito anos, podia acontecer-me entrar numa sala e certas pessoas começarem a chorar.”, assim começa o livro **“Os Desaparecidos – À procura de seis em seis milhões”**, com o jovem **Daniel Mendelsohn**, a ouvir os sussurros **”desses velhos e velhas”** judeus **”Oh, ele parece-se tanto com o Shmiel!”**. **”Deste Shmiel, claro, alguma coisa eu sabia: irmão mais velho do meu avô, que com a mulher e as suas quatro lindas filhas fora morto pelos nazis durante a guerra. *Shmiel. Morto pelos nazis.”*** (Pág. 25)

"... **Shmiel** (...): irmão mais velho do meu avô, que, com a mulher e as suas quatro lindas filhas fora morto pelos nazis durante a guerra. *Shmiel. Morto pelos nazis.*" (Pág. 25)

Daniel Mendelsohn pretende construir ou reconstruir a história sobre o passado da sua família, em particular, sobre o seu tio-avô Shmiel, a sua mulher Ester, e quatro filhas, Lorka, Frydka, Ruchele e Bronia - **"Os Desaparecidos – À procura de seis em seis milhões"**, um desejo, um fascínio, uma obsessão, que começa por fragmentos de "histórias" e "segredos" murmurados, por um conjunto de fotografias antigas e por um pequeno maço de cartas que o seu avô deixou após a morte, numa pesquisa e numa investigação que começa na pequena aldeia de Bolechow ou Bolekhiv, na Polónia ou na Ucrânia, e que o leva a Israel, à Austrália, à Dinamarca e à Suécia.
Com base em entrevistas e depoimentos de inúmeras testemunhas, nem sempre coincidentes, incluindo, familiares e amigos, sobretudo, os últimos *bolechowitas*, com quem se encontrou e conversou, partilhando "momentos" e "memórias" dolorosas sobre acontecimentos dramáticos, profundamente perturbadores, **Daniel Mendelsohn**, escreve um livro com um rigor histórico inquestionável, num contexto narrativo que vai avançando quase como numa investigação "policial", procurando pequenos indícios, algumas pistas, surgindo algumas coincidências que são determinantes nessa pesquisa, para resgatar a uma obscuridade o passado, comovente e trágico, dos seus seis familiares, conseguindo "individualizar" o seu martírio e a sua morte, num enquadramento catastrófico de genocídio étnico dos seis milhões de judeus durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial.

Ester, a sua mulher, **Bronia**, a sua filha, **Sam (Shmiel)**

"Os Desaparecidos – À procura de seis em seis milhões" *é um excelente livro de não-ficção de* ***Daniel Mendelsohn****, com fotografias do seu irmão* ***Matt Mendelsohn*** *, sobre um dos períodos mais conturbados e dramáticos da história Mundial e Europeia, o genocídio de cerca de seis milhões de judeus, num extermínio étnico liderado por Adolf Hitler e pelo Partido Nazi, que ocorreu em inúmeros territórios ocupados pelos alemães durante a Segunda Guerra Mundial.*

"Compreendo, ao reler estas cartas, que o que as torna tão assustadoramente comovedoras é o tratamento na segunda pessoa. Todas as cartas, realmente, são dirigidas a um "tu" - "Despeço-me de ti e beijo-te do fundo do meu coração", é a frase de despedida de Shmiel - e é por causa disto que se torna tão difícil, ao ler as cartas, mesmo as dirigidas a outras pessoas , não nos sentirmos implicados, não nos sentirmos vagamente responsáveis. Ao ler as cartas de Shmiel, quando as encontrei, foi a minha primeira experiência de estranha proximidade com os mortos que, no entanto, conseguem sempre permanecer fora do nosso alcance." (Pág. 119)

"Para mim Auschwitz representa o oposto do que me interessava e – como comecei a constatar no dia em que de facto fui a Auschwitz – da razão pela qual tinha feito aquela viagem. Auschwitz, agora, tornara-se no símbolo de uma só palavra, gigantesco, na generalização grosseira, estenográfica, para o que acontecera aos judeus da Europa (…) Mas mesmo que aceitemos Auschwitz como símbolo, pensava eu enquanto andava naquele chão tão estranhamente pacífico e bem tratado, há problemas. Tinha sido para salvar os meus parentes de generalidades, símbolos, abreviaturas, para lhes restaurar as suas particularidades e características próprias que eu fizera esta viagem bizarra e árdua. *Mortos pelos nazis* - sim, mas por quem, exactamente?
A pavorosa ironia de Auschwitz, (...) é que a extensão do que mostra é tão gigantesca que o colectivo e o anónimo, todo o âmbito do crime, estão constantemente, paradoxalmente, expressos à custa de qualquer sentido da vida individual.
(…)

E assim, enquanto andava por Auschwitz, debatia-me com a pergunta sobre o motivo por que uma pessoa vai como turista a lugares como este. Não, de uma forma geral pelo menos, para aprender o que aí sucedeu; pois quem quer que vá a Auschwitz e a muitos outros lugares como esse já sabe o que lá se passou. E também não certamente para ficar com uma ideia melhor sobre "como era aquilo"..." (Pág. 132 - 133)
