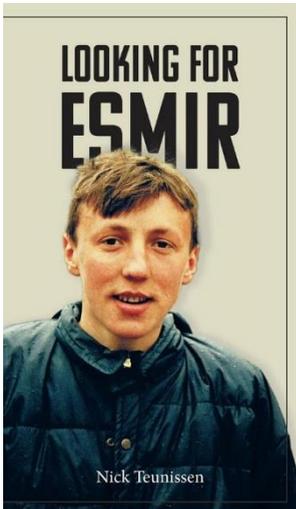


## *Book Review*

### Moved by Esmir

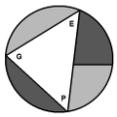
Edwin F. Giltay

Nick Teunissen, *Looking for Esmir* Moordrecht, NL: Bloemberk Publishing, 2021, 136 pages. ISBN 978-9463741880 (paperback) ISBN-10: 9463741887 ISBN-13: 978-9463741880 <sup>i</sup>



“A well-balanced story about the loved ones they lost, we morally owe to them and to Bosnia,” writes the book’s author, the Dutch theatremaker Nick Teunissen, in his foreword. Subsequently, he puts his money where his mouth is, in a non-fiction novella that is deeply moving.

*Looking for Esmir* depicts the lives of a handful of teenagers in Srebrenica, where fate would determine who would survive the genocide, and who would not. The author transcends the boundary of life and death by presenting a true-to-life portrait of Esmir. His mother lost him and her personal belongings in 1995. Last year—thanks to Teunissen and his network—she gets to see a photo of him for the first time since the atrocities. She presses it against her chest, almost cuddling it. She cannot stop crying. And this reader could not



hold back his tears either.

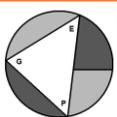
It is a unique quality when a storyteller can connect with everyone with heart and soul. Teunissen is a master of this magic. The life stories he penned flow naturally. Another special touch: the royalties from this literary debut go to a well-chosen cause. Teunissen donates them to a Bosnian organization supporting young people's education.

For that matter, it is not just Esmir's memory that is being revived. The book also lets him speak. Published in three languages<sup>ii</sup>, it is Esmir who here shows the world that a people and a culture can never be erased. His spirit and those of other bereaved sons of Srebrenica are inviolable and immortal, as is proven by this novella.

*Edwin F. Giltay, a freelance editor of mixed Dutch-Indonesian descent, edits social-critical books and publications. He has become well-known for his revelatory book *The Cover-up General* (Dutch: *De doofpotgeneraal*) exposing a Dutch military intelligence scandal having to do with Dutch involvement in the fall of Srebrenica in July 1995 during the final days of the Bosnian War. The book was initially banned by a lower Dutch court in December 2015; yet the Court of Appeal of The Hague annulled the book ban in April 2016, ruling that the book's accuracy is not in doubt (see [www.thecoverupgeneral.com](http://www.thecoverupgeneral.com)) [edwingiltay@gmail.com](mailto:edwingiltay@gmail.com)*

### Endnotes

- i. Summary of the book by the publisher: "In the summer of 1994 Serge Janssen was based in Srebrenica as a twenty-one-year-old soldier and



amateur photographer. Esmir Mujičić was an eighteenyear-old refugee from the nearby village of Štedra. The two young men soon became friends. After a couple of months Serge had to leave Srebrenica and he took one more photograph of his friend before saying goodbye. This was the last one ever taken of Esmir.

Twenty-five years later Nick Teunissen promised Serge to help him find Esmir's relatives. Together with inhabitants of Srebrenica Nick went on a search for Esmir's mother, hoping to give her this photo. Gradually Nick got to know more about Esmir: how he lived before the war, the kind of person he was...

'Looking for Esmir' is the story of a young man who wanted to get away from besieged Srebrenica hoping to start a new life."

- ii. The book has also appeared in Dutch under the title *Op zoek naar Esmir* at the same publisher (originally published by Anne-Claire van de Vendel in the Netherlands), and in Bosnian under the title *Traževići Esmira*" at Dobra Knjiga publishers in Sarajevo, Bosnia-Hercegovina.