THEY ARE TRYING TO BREAK YOUR HEART 46385

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The dual narrative of *They Are Trying to Break Your Heart* makes an original contribution toward contemporary understandings of two historical traumas: the Balkans conflict (1992-95) and the Indian Ocean tsunami (2004). Both narratives explore post-traumatic stress syndrome and grief. The narrative juxtaposition of man-made and natural disaster poses original research questions about political power and human agency. What can we learn from the representation of emotional healing and how can we gain agency over the process? What historical circumstances are necessary to facilitate recovery from traumas, human and 'natural'?

The research process began with my experience of reporting the Indian Ocean Tsunami for the BBC. I completed original ethnographic research over a six-month period in Thailand and Sri-Lanka. In 2010, I returned to Bosnia to document the memories of a family in the Balkan conflict, with whom I had shared an experience of the1994 war. This rigorous research process was augmented with archival research and generated new questions related to the representation and memorialisation of war, effecting the novel's narrative structure. What is the role of storytelling in a society's memorialisation? What is the connection to personal healing? In answer, the novel's narrative design contributes to a conversation about irresolution, presence and forgetting.

I discussed the novel in a conference paper in Sarajevo (2017), where researchers of memorialisation considered representations of the Bosnian conflict and concluded the work's multiple perspectives made a positive contribution to the balance between remembering and forgetting in post-conflict society, highlighting the useful role of the 'outsider' to narratives of civil war. In an article I wrote for *The New Statesman*, the research experience of the novel illuminated the challenge of remembrance and forgiveness in connection with the prosecution of Radovan Karadzic. The novel was also showcased at three UK literary festivals in 2016.