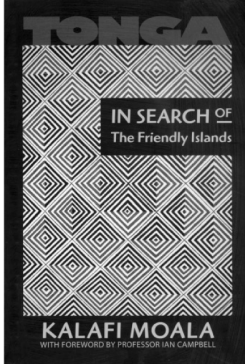


IN SEARCH OF THE FRIENDLY ISLANDS

TONGA AND THE MEDIA



BY KALAFI MOALA

THIS IS A SOUL-SEARCHING BOOK ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE PACIFIC KINGDOM AS IT PURSUES DEMOCRATIC CHANGES IN THE WAKE OF THE NOVEMBER 2006 URBAN RIOT AND HOW THE MEDIA IS FACING UP TO THE CHANGES.

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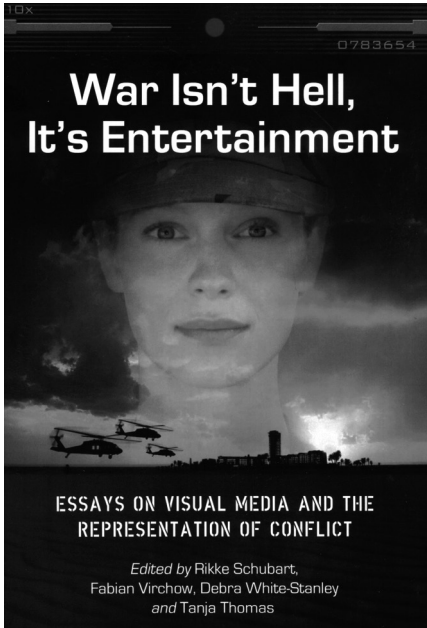
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A moment for self-reflection

War Isn't Hell, Its Entertainment: Essays on Visual Media and the Representation of Conflict, edited by Rikke Schubart, Fabian Virchow, Debra White-Stanley and Tanja Thomas. Published by McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2009, 290 pp, ISBN 978-0-7864-2558-6

WHEN *The Hurt Locker*, a small budgeted film made more on the lines of docudrama than a blockbuster, won the Oscar for the best film in 2010, it might have surprised the world. But for the American audiences it was the ultimate glamorisation of nationalism: the creation of heroes out of ordinary soldiers fighting an unseen enemy called 'terror'. Without giving any political or moral justification of the war, the film was a eulogy to those who die in a 'national cause'.

War Isn't Hell, Its Entertainment treats one of the most debated issues of our times i.e. the relationship between war and media, in a similar manner. The book offers no apology for the existence of such a relationship. Neither does it try to condemn it or separate the two. 'It is much too late for that,' as Schubart admits in her introduction. The 290 pages of the book simply aim to 'investigate and trace their morphing into one another, to locate new developments,



(and) to critically discuss their use and signification' (p. 4).

Yet at the same time, the book evokes a personal response from the reader. It makes anyone who is the active user of the visual media to pause and question their response to war and its exploitation in the visual media. Who doesn't enjoy killing the enemy while playing the war video games? People watch the personal recordings of war on YouTube precisely because they are entertaining. Everyone likes watching the 'war action' movies because of their special effects and we all admire and remember the actors who starred in famous world war films.

But this is all on the pretext that it is only a game or a film—make believe, not reality. But the book attempts to prove that in our world of reality shows and visual effects, even war has become an entertainment.

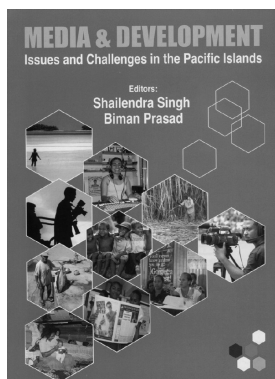
This book is a collection of essays from scholars in various disciplines including Art and Literature, Media, Cultural and Film Studies, Conflict Studies, History, Military Sociology, American Studies and Political Communication from the universities in Norway, Germany, United Kingdom and the USA. They are grouped into three parts demarcated on the basis of the nature and genre of the visual media.

Part I, 'The Public War Body', explores the nostalgic power of war memorials, the personal snatches of war recordings of soldiers on YouTube and the sportsmen and women who enlist in the army to train.

Part II, 'War and Entertainment' explores the dramatised portrayal of war in television serials and films like *M*A*S*H*, *Matrix* and *Master and Commander* which play on human emotions of pleasure, fear, excitement and admiration through mediated representation of war.

The last Part III, 'Playing at War' focuses on video electronic games which re-enact war scenarios and ensure personal participation through simulation and virtual reality effects.

South Pacific Media



Media and Development: Issues and Challenges in the Pacific Islands

Edited by Shailendra Singh and
Biman C. Prasad.

This book considers questions key development issues shaping the region's progress. Contributors include scholars, journalists and educators.

Published by the Fijian Institute of Applied Studies
and the AUT Pacific Media Centre.

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Using a variety of methods and theories ranging from qualitative interviews, ethnographic audience studies, content analysis, media studies, film studies and sociological theory, the essays are tied together by the reality that war is used ruthlessly by the visual media for entertainment.

The way out for all who are surrounded by it lies not in understanding 'why it exists' but 'how it works'.
—*Rukhsana Aslam is a doctoral candidate at AUT University.*