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Giorgio Mariani's solid, broad and well-grounded study of *anti-war* literature examines the main features and debates raised by this significant, but disputable, genre. Mariani's work, which has played an important role in promoting International American studies, covers a wide variety of themes: his first five books examined novels written by canonical and less canonical US writers, surveyed the place of Native American fiction and focused on issues of class and popular culture; he returns here to the subject of *war* which was at the heart of his first monograph, *Spectacular Narratives: Representations of Class and War in Stephen Crane and the American 1890s*, published in 1992.

*Waging War on War* is an insightful and thorough book, divided into two sections: the first part, although shorter, sets the terms of the following analyses since it considers the theory of the genre. The second part, more substantial in terms of volume, offers significant critical readings of literary works ranging from the American War of Independence to the War in Iraq. In chapter 1, Mariani interrogates what constitutes *anti-war* fiction; instead of a sweeping category, Mariani considers *anti-war* literature as an inclusive genre, bearing in mind that notions of war and peace are part of a necessary continuum shaped by catches and dilemmas. Not only novels moved by clear "anti-war impulses," but also those more complex or subtle novels that go beyond anti-war propaganda, are all part of a broader idea of "resistance," which call our attention to the way academics have tended to underestimate traditions of pacifism and movements of nonaggression in detriment to depictions of war. In chapter 2 Mariani explains how writers such as Ralph Waldo Emerson,

William James, Jane Addams, Kenneth Burke, and Martin Luther King Jr. used the rhetoric of war when promoting peace. In this sense, anti-war discourses are shown to have less to do with pastoral philosophies than with the spirit of heroism applied to war itself. Chapter 3 considers the contribution of James's "The Moral Equivalent of War" (1919) to the history of US pacifist thinking, namely its composite vision of the dynamics of war, where utopian desires and moral virtues also emerge. It considers Burke's desire to "transcend" war (73) as opposed to the prospect of absolute peace – a totality Burke remains suspicious of. In conclusion, Stephen Crane's "A Mystery of Heroism: A Detail of an American Battle" is presented as a learning route from war to peace, since the story revises notions of heroism by projecting the "fearlessness of the warrior from the battlefield to the humanitarian context" (80). A return to some of these theoretical questions would be extremely useful in the last part of the book, as a way of conclusion and systematization of the volume's main debates but, as it is, the first section certainly provides a clear presentation of key issues which will support the forthcoming readings.

In chapter 4 we enter the second section of the book which focuses on specific critical readings. Mariani starts by examining Joel Barlow's *Columbiad* (1807), conveying how this epic narrative is rich in ideological tensions which allow it to be viewed as a "peace epic" (91). As a counter-epic where peace prevails, Barlow's text clarifies the possibilities of considering peace as an American value, one that needs to be understood contextually as an intricate approach to war. The reading of *Moby Dick* (1851) in chapter 5 reminds readers of the cyclical history of violence that goes back to early settlement: Herman Melville's depiction of a brutal world where even resistance leads to more violence is poignantly depicted by Mariani. The rhetoric of sacrifice and survival, and its specific imagery can, in this context, be seen as emblematic of the way peace-seeking beliefs can themselves become trapped within the logic of "victimage" (125), the view that peace depends upon violent mechanisms. In chapter 6, Mariani recalls Ellen La Motte's book, *The Backwash of War* (1916). La Motte's anatomy of war is a much-forgotten text that crosses gender lines and defies the boundaries between domestic and public, hospital and battlefield, cure and torture, refining our perception of the wider contexts of war. Mariani reveals how, by drawing on her experience as a nurse, La Motte's portraits of the *Great War* are not only painful but also *wounding*, for they explore the ways women's contribution to the war effort can be said to be both politically regressive and progressive. In chapter 7, we return to the question of the *sacrificial* features of war but now as vital elements of the apocryphal intertexts used by William Faulkner. Well engaged and clearly positioned in relationship to previous readings of Faulkner's novel, Mariani shows how the contradictions of the writer's anti-pacifist stance are part of his conflictual relation to war, which emerge through textual paradoxes and loops; Mariani's reading of Faulkner clearly highlights the "corporal dimension" which is

central to this novel, a feature simultaneously theological and political. Chapter 8 explores the much-discussed work of Tim O'Brien by considering the author's postmodern approach within the context of his morals about war. Mariani finds in O'Brien's Vietnam stories an existential rather than a pedagogical value, and he underscores the Emersonian influence that underscores O'Brien's rejection of war.

Chapter 9 is dedicated to selected works about the War in Iraq. This poignant chapter embraces texts as different as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Fifth Book of Peace* (2004), Brian Turner's *Here, Bullet* (2005) and *Phantom Noise* (2010) as well as Helen Benedict's *Sand Queen* (2011) and her study, *The Lonely Soldier: The Private War of Women Serving in Iraq* (2009). Mariani begins by showing how Kingston's work argues for "pre-emptive peace" (197); he argues that her pacifism is a productive force that reaches for justice and equality. Generous and careful attention is given to Brian Turner's striking poems which are read, in the context of significant comparatist debates, as entwining the history of the conquerors with that of the victims of the Empire. Interrogating his own relationship with the past, Turner's poetry is simultaneously a voice, which is violently awake and willing to record what is happening, as well as a numb injured body which needs to be rescued. Mariani movingly shows how the cosmopolitanism of poems such as "The discotheque" is self-critical, capable of criticizing the aggressive role of the coalition forces in Iraq and of surveying the wishful ignorance of the soldiers. Finally, Mariani's reading of Benedict's work considers the legacy of the Iraq war and the way it points to equally uncomfortable settlements. Benedict's book most forceful critique is directed towards the psychological and physical abuse experienced by woman soldiers by her fellow combatants within the context of coalition forces. Attentive to the problems raised by *anti-war* texts, Mariani concludes by warning the reader about the contradictory uses which can be made of these works.

Although the critical scope of the book could perhaps invite more international/comparative readings of "pacifist fighting" outside the US, as well as a more thorough view of the roles played by capitalist processes and different ideologies in war and anti-war discourses, this is certainly an important and serious work on a subject that needs to be carefully rethought in relation to new historical contexts and debates. This is a rigorous, knowledgeable and wide-ranging contribution to our understanding of *war* and *anti-war* literature as well as to the knotty issues raised by the relations established between these two terms in US fiction.

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