

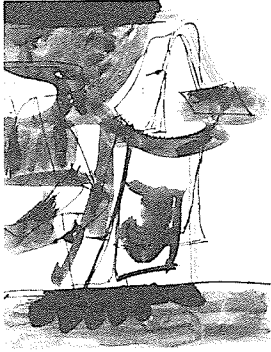
**THE WOUNDED
GENERATION:
America after Vietnam**
edited by A. D. Horne
Prentice-Hall, 1981, 266 pp.
\$12.95 cloth, \$5.95 paper

More than two million Americans, two-thirds of them volunteers, served in Indochina between 1964 and 1973; of these men, 51,000 died and 270,000 were wounded. During the same unpopular war, some 16 million American youths never served at all, including 570,000 apparent draft evaders. Thus, a wide gap in experience now exists between those of the Vietnam generation who served and those, notably the sons of the privileged, who managed to avoid service. The bitter legacy emerges clearly in this useful anthology of essays, memoirs, and excerpts from novels by veterans. Most illuminating is the transcript of a 1980 *Washington Post* symposium where former antiwar activists (e.g., journalist James Fallows) argue with veterans-turned-writers, such as James Webb and Philip Caputo. A partial reconciliation takes place. And ex-GI John Wheeler, now a lawyer, predicts that a cohort of strong leaders will emerge from the Vietnam ordeal: "A lot of men were chewed up by the war. . . . Some were killed, but if the heat in the oven is higher, then the steel that comes out has got to be better."

Arts & Letters

**ARSHILE GORKY:
The Implications
of Symbols**
by Harry Rand
Allanheld, 1981
246 pp. \$40

The modernist movement in American art, particularly the abstract expressionism of the New York School, has long been perceived (and often dismissed) as a retreat from representation and accessible meaning. The work of the influential Armenian-born émigré artist, Arshile Gorky (1904–48) suggests another possible interpretation. Examining the career of Gorky (born Vosdanik Adoin), Rand, curator at the National Museum of American Art, throws new light on the larger art movement of the 1930s, '40s, and early '50s. A survivor of the Turkish massacres in his homeland, a poseur who created an identity (complete with new name) to deal with the land he adopted in 1920, Gorky made of his experiences a new, distinctive, American art. His early career in New York, in the company of Willem de Kooning and others, was largely devoted to imita-



Courtesy Allan Stone Gallery,
New York City.

tion and assimilation of his chosen masters, including Cézanne, Picasso, and Vermeer. But even as a young man, he began to develop a private iconography comprised of people (particularly his mother), places (his native Armenia), and common objects (often furniture). These images he obsessively worked and reduced to essential, almost coded shapes. Fearful of loss, Gorky (who taught camouflage during World War II) disguised his beloved objects and people to preserve them from change, violence, destruction—forces that ultimately drove the cancer-ridden painter to hang himself. Rand gives us a reading of Gorky's "visual diary"; he also makes us look for hints of figuration in painting we once too quickly labeled abstract.

DREAM FLIGHTS

by Dave Smith
Univ. of Ill., 1981, 76 pp.
\$10 cloth, \$4.95 paper

Rooted in family life and in the landscape of Virginia, these poems by one of America's best young poets have both the disturbing quality of dreams and the power of flight. Some are airborne meditations—one composed en route from Honolulu to Salt Lake City (where Smith taught before moving to the University of Florida), another between Utah and his native Virginia. In all of the poems, dreams are memories from the "deep-hidden meat" of the brain, and journeys are temporal, as when, once a year, the poet goes through the family photograph album (*the images . . . gather themselves into the history of our kind*). Moving between eloquence and colloquialisms, between simple truth and grand metaphysics, Smith evokes scenes from his childhood. Some are ugly with seedy Southern gentility or redneck racism. But others communicate an attractive sense of place. Explaining how crabs are caught to his six-year-old daughter, he gives her a story that will be *remembered right./Loved*. He recalls a red woodpecker, shot at and missed: *its odd knowledge, the way/it flared with lazy yellow wings into the dark that spread in my body*. Smith uses words the way his wife cleans a fish: *Her knife flies as lethal as love*. And the reader feels the power of his voice that at poem's end lingers hauntingly.