

TERESE SVOBODA

Vets

That ancient flag-carrying lot,
medal-chested with the defining deed of youth—
combat outside citizenry—with the *esprit de* corpse
of each for each, as gay at that, haunted
by when law goes absent and *to kill*
thrusts its imperative,

they prod the rest of us with weapon tips,
whet and sharpened still. Grizzled, even bearded,
feeble and en-wizened and perhaps
wiser than all the rest of us,
they march to quell youth—ours and theirs—
defining innocence, such as vets do.