Confronting the romanticism of war

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Watching the movie, you become a child once again. You know that the actors can get up once the scene's been shot, so where's the reality of war?

It's simple. Watch the movie and "come to terms" with Vietnam. Don't worry, you can read the history book next year. You can visit the Boston Veterans Administration Hospital and talk to the Vietnam vet in the next lifetime.

Some of those once-young soldiers have come to recognize the romanticism of war for what it is—pure adolescent fantasy. You wobble, you collapse to the ground, and you see the splatter of blood. Only, this time, you don't get up again.

On the night of Dec. 22, 1961, James Thomas Davis of Livingston, NJ, discovered the reality of war. Returning from the field in a ¾-ton transport, Davis found himself with ten South Vietnamese soldiers, 12 miles west of Saigon, one mile away from the outpost in Duc Hoa.

The Viet Cong detonated a remote-controlled mine as the truck passed over it. They opened fire as the wreckage lurched for 30 yards, coming to a halt on the right side of the road. Davis emerged from the cab of the truck and returned fire with his M-14 carbine. The soldiers shot him in the hand.

He was 25 years old. He was the first American advisor to die in combat, in an undeclared war. How do you explain the finality of death? Where is Saigon? Where is all Passion? Where is the line between influence and intervention?

Forget it. Maybe you should just show your kid a picture that can be found in last Sunday's New York Times. In that picture, a Salvadoran soldier who can't be more than 18 years old, who's wearing the camouflage garb that wouldn't look out of place in one of those Survival games, carries an automatic rifle the size of a man. He stands amid a dozen body bags that lie scattered across the floor.

Think about what you'd say, then, if your kid asked, "Is this the beginning or is this the end?"

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Disagreeing with ROTC is no reason to ban it

To the Editor:

Although I am not a member of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps I was deeply disturbed by the letter of F. Sal Vafaei concerning ROTC at MIT. "Blind militarnation is for cowards," April 7.

Vafaei may not like ROTC, but that is no reason to ban it. Following similar thoughts, the Science Action Coordinating Committee (for example) should be asked to move off campus because there are probably people who feel its ideas are dangerous and anti-American. Both sides are wrong.

Because Vafaei does not like what ROTC does, he wants to ban it, and labels those who disagree with him "deceived," "right-wing reactionaries," and so forth. Vafaei should use a little less knee-jerk rhetoric and face up to the fact that his view is not the only one.

Richard L. Carreiro '89

HYACKERS HEAVEN

Do you know about this Summer job program designed for freshmen and sophomore undergraduate students interested in research projects in the Laboratory for Computer Science?

Its goal is to identify creative, undergraduate computer science people and encourage their development. Qualified students, with the help of research supervisors, prepare UROP proposals based on current research projects within the laboratory. The full time Summer involvement should continue as a part time UROP project in the Fall.

To get started, attend an informational meeting on Thursday, April 23 at 5:15 pm in Building NE43, Room 512A, or obtain an information packet after that date from NE43-501. For additional information, please contact Pat Anderegg (ext. 5828).