

Joseph T. Cox

Homecoming

Walking with my son on the sandy hook, we stare at a full moon
that he finds hard to believe polishes the rough desert he just left.
We gaze across at the lights of a great city and the dark spaces.
The spirit of atrocity fades in soft rhythms of Jersey beach.

The more we talk, the more we realize we are cowards, retreating
into a common bond of camaraderie, medicating ourselves with myths
of old soldiers. On his left wrist he wears his best friend's name,
tangible reminder of a man disintegrated by a suicide bomber.

In this sweet air, it is hard to recall the daily dragon's breath
that claimed a family's only son. My son has difficulty talking.
He made this pilgrimage to explain love in a time of fear,
but it's easier to trade clichés and swap sanitized sound bites.

On the drive back, my son mentally walks a soldier's stations of the cross:
go to war, glimpse the darkness in your soul, try to find your way home.
Haunted by survivor guilt, he will learn that even those who lived are lost.
After war the homes we try to come home to are no more.

A frequent contributor to **WLA**, **JOSEPH T. COX** is headmaster of the Haverford School and is author of the poetry collection *Garden's Close*.