

Joy Harjo

Skeleton of Winter

These winter days
I've remained silent
as a white man's watch
keeping time
 an old bone
empty as a fish skeleton
at low tide.
It is almost too dark
 for vision
these ebony mornings
but there is still memory,
the other-sight
and still I see.
Rabbits get torn under
cars that travel at night
but come out the other
side, not bruised
breathing soft
like no fear.
And sound is light, is
movement. The sun revolves
and sings.

There are still ancient
symbols
 alive
I did dance with the prehistoric horse
years and births later
near a cave wall
late winter.
A tooth-hard rocking
in my belly comes back,
something echoes
all forgotten dreams,
 in winter.
I am memory alive
 not just a name
but an intricate part
of this web of motion,
meaning: earth, sky, stars circling
my heart
 centrifugal.

Joy Harjo, an internationally renowned performer and writer of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, was named the 23rd Poet Laureate of the United States in 2019. The author of nine books of poetry, several plays, children's books, and a memoir, *Crazy Brave*, her many honors include the Ruth Lily Prize for Lifetime Achievement from the Poetry Foundation, the Academy of American Poets Wallace Stevens Award, a PEN USA Literary Award, Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund Writers Award, a Rasmuson US Artist Fellowship, two NEA Fellowships, and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Harjo is a chancellor of the Academy of American Poets and a founding board member of the Native Arts and Cultures Foundation. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.