

NANCE VAN WINCKEL

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*To Be Beautiful (The Bronze Age)**(Musée d'Unterlinden, Colmar, France)*

Of the skeletal remains under glass,  
the arm bones were intact but the fingers  
missing. Perforated saucer of skull. Thick  
bronze bracelets gone green. The person  
had been *a man*, I translated and so advised  
the German lady who'd told her husband *a girl*.  
Then she frowned, turned, and glared down  
at the slivers of ribs and femurs as if they could,  
or should, explain themselves.

The bones were paler than the dirt  
they were in. He'd worn four necklaces  
and the same sort of hoop earrings  
my sister liked, which made me smile  
and try to remember exactly what  
small ones we'd made her wear in her casket  
since there'd been a church around us  
and the only allowable grandeur drifted down  
from a nail through Christ's feet.