

Touch

We know she was clever because of her hands.
Hers, the first opposable thumb. Shards of her hip and skull
Suggest she was young, thirteen perhaps,
When the flash flood drowned her. Erect she stood
Lithe as a gymnast, four feet tall,

Our innocent progenitor.
Sleek-furred technician of flint and straw.
Here are her knuckle bones.

I know her touch. Though she could easily snap
My wrist, she is gentle in my dream.
She probes by face, scans my arm,
She touches my hand to know me.
Her eyes are grey in the dream, and bright.

Little mother, forgive me.
I wake you for answers in the night
Like any infant. Tell me about touch.
What necessities designed your hands and mine?
Did you kill, carve, gesture to god or gods?
Did the caress shape your hand or your hand the caress?

Michael Donaghy (1954-2004)