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Evidence for the Bone Being a Flute

Avery Slater

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EVERY SLATER

Evidence for the Bone Being a Flute

Ivan Turk defends the Divje Babe artefact

No counter-bite reciprocates the piercings in reverse.
The holes compose a line, at equal distance,
and of the bored diameters, there is but little difference.
Spacing corresponds to human fingers.

Not top-to-inside marks of fangs. Furrows and striations
ring the piercings, showing patience augured through with purpose: note,
all traces of the spongiose were purged as proved by lack
of marrow's stain.

Unmatched by wolves' teeth, or hyenas'—
punctures, through the thickest part, unlikely for a predator
or scavenger. The bone was found
beside a fire pit, the ground there strewn with other bones

yet none of these were perforated. Taphonomic evidence
has ascertained the bone's response to blowing
produces diatonic scale. Location of a scratch below
suggests a thumb-hole, partly drilled. We know the skeleton,
in other cases,

inspired music's first attempts. In China, from the crane's already
hollow wing-bone earliest recorded flutes were made. This bone:
taken from a cave bear's thigh, four times as old, Neanderthal,
but still the principle's the same:
endeavour and invention

to bring back from the slaughtered—bird
or bear—a sound before the netted
snare, the blade and club, the flesh
and fire. Before the word.