

CHRISTMAS OFFERINGS

Memoria manuum — handprints



The cadavers and we began the year together.
We tentative, curious, wanting experience,
They pickled and shrouded, occult mysteries.

Months on, familiars, they dwindled, yielding their secrets.
Hands probing, teased, peeled and picked down to bones.
Regard grew with understanding, confidence and skill.
Though too there was levity, subdued; we were young, hard learning,
How try and temper exuberance with respect,
For dignity of life and mortal frailty, and of death.

Years on, while watching much of human striving failing,
Some images, unwilling, out of those times, still come.
Especially of flayed and party coloured specimens in jars.
Sinews laid bare, the bottled hands, those truly human elements, displayed,
Still cause to muse again, what violence, arts or music they had made.

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