INHERITANCE  
i.m. Mark Hollis  
  
Thomas Merton was unsure why he had  
a wet footprint on the top of his mind.  
I am more concerned with the ideas  
and worries travelling over the viaduct  
of despair and gloom into my brain.  
  
The man who wrote oblique songs  
of faith and doubt after several years  
as a pop star, unexpectedly died young:  
his aching blues play on repeat in my car.  
Someone is posting unheard variations  
  
of songs by another singer I used to know,   
even though he died over ten years ago.  
It is a kind of haunting, a kind of presence;  
as is the album that once might have been,  
released by a band three decades later on.  
  
They walk beside me when I sing their songs;  
it only has to be a few bars, I don’t need  
to hear the whole thing anymore. Memory   
and grief triggered by music, a sentence   
or phrase, sometimes simply the truth.  
  
The paper is blank, the radio quiet,   
the viaduct arches permanently in shadow.  
My students marched through mud as a train  
passed overhead. All the songs in the world  
can't help me recall the faces of the dead.  
  
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