

COLIN

i.m.

I remember you now that first day
striding into our stuffy staff-room
a landed gent without excess baggage
a tie-man venturing into open-necked bohemia.

Perhaps it was your dapper mien set you apart
a penchant for cravats you cultivated in time
as you grew in sedate confidence to the clack
of castanet and laboured *sevillanas* in your newfound
Spanish castle after a brief sojourn of thirty years
navigating the caustic contours of the Shannon.

Soon your idiosyncrasies became the bread and brunt
of our dead hours: the three agendas laced with post-its
multicoloured and sequenced with a logic only you
could fathom; a collection of stationary lifted
from a NASA project; a briefcase cool and
enigmatic as that of the presidential Red Button.

You were the heart and soul of every friendly outing
young teachers came to you for counsel, students
likewise sought your secret, the wherefore
of your inveterate bonhomie, your unquenchable *joie de vivre*-
selfless, words took shape in countless hours
given graciously for the good of others.

Was it the American said you had the air of an aristocrat?
'Pay no heed', your wry reply. 'Speaking proper English
confounds them!' For it was Liverpool made you;
like some of mine you too found war in the tube
stations and in your unflappable fashion
strolled out to kiss the light thereafter.

There is only one reason to live, you said:
to give the best of yourself in every instant.
No other testimony is valid, no other gesture truer than this
your last inviolate rite, your one abiding legacy.

Liam Liddy
Madrid,
31 octobre, 2009.