Measurements

Phase I

I count.
—people in rooms, at poetry readings, on the street.
Not quite obsessively nor all of the time.
But often enough:
—steps, objects on my window sill or shelf, cormorants on rocky foreshores,
   books on my desk, people at prayer, seats in cinemas (or maybe just heads).
More consolatory I think: – the consolation of practical knowledge
or in some measure, of my mind’s understanding of I.

Now, because of this, I know that
September 28 contains a random partial link
with my brain’s synaptic conglomerates:
the definition, in 1889, of the metre
as a meridian based distance
at the melting point of ice, between two lines marked
on a standard bar of platinum with ten percent iridium.
That was in the one hundredth year before the birth
of my daughter Aideen in 1989.
—Aideen, the youngest, six characters; Cormac, six; Fergus, six; but Soracha,
   the eldest, chose her seven, though christened Sarah, five.
Both containing and releasing are creative ways.
Seamus is six. Their mother eight.

The material intractability of measurement, consequence and interpretation
attracts;
but what matters in our immeasurable meridian,
amid players of games and curious crowds,
is birth.
That is where science and poetry channel.
The rest, practical, political and innocent is, ultimately, meaningless
like bad rhymes and rotting metres.
random measurement may seduce random movement
    or hang us from the rafters
    speak to be spoken to
    be silent to hear truth
    slide down the balustrade
    from atop a cone of words
    until you cannot hear the throat
    only the whisper of lips
    and the lapping of your tongue's
    hidden movement

random numbers find me
randomly – this day is August 28
— for me, O'Flaherty's date
my own October 31 has been
denied by the State
my passport tells it 30
(days hath september
april june november) but
my mother told me 31
and she mattered
all of my diary days

we measure everything
and hate not being able to fly
we kill brothers and sisters for pennies
I flew the nest before today
tomorrow beat your wings
    in serendipity
    risk the truth
of destruction that may follow
— it may not
your song sung is a song
for silence does not compose
    unless you sing
Poet and publisher Seamus Cashman founded the Irish literary publishing house Wolfhound Press (1974-2001). He has three poetry collections, the most recent, *That Morning will Come: new and selected poems* (SalmonPoetry, 2007) and his next volume will be a book length poem, *The Sistine Gaze*, due in 2013. He was the first International Fellow at the Black Earth Institute and is editing the third online issue of *About Place* on the theme of “Peaks & Valleys” due for release is November.