

Degrees of Freedom

Time as reassurance –
the familiar moon,
waxing crescent; a child
in the playground, alone
with her thoughts, on a swing
suspended from a cross-
bar; a pendulum's slow
pulse. One degree of freedom.

But couple a second pendulum

to the moving bob
of the first and
our careful system starts to
misbehave disjointed
as a Charlie Chaplin dance
hesitates an unexpected
swivel
and how we skip rise
fall
depends on the smallest

impetus -
an email sent in anger a phone call not made a train missed a word left out just one more pint
a bounding deer a moment of unprotected love too

busy
to see the doctor
and we tumble
flailing
in a
ravine
while
on
a
swing
suspended
from
the
moon a child whirls through
unresisting space.