

A Breath of Awe

In Grahamstown's Public Library
I read that we are towers of cells,
billions and billions of sedulous cells,
each one more complex than a town.
I turned the page, once more amazed
at life's deep daring and finesse.
The library clock ticked on, unfazed.

I learned that vast encyclopaedias
were racked inside a chromosome
and microbes moleculed the past.
In some a filament whirred round,
I read with disbelief, then shock,
more than a hundred thousand times
with each slow ticking of that clock.

Beside a book, a phone-screen lit.
Home time, it said. I stood intent
to live each day with greater awe,
yet walking out that reading room
I saw grey rain gust in the door
and anxious faces hurrying past
and huddled beggars, as before.