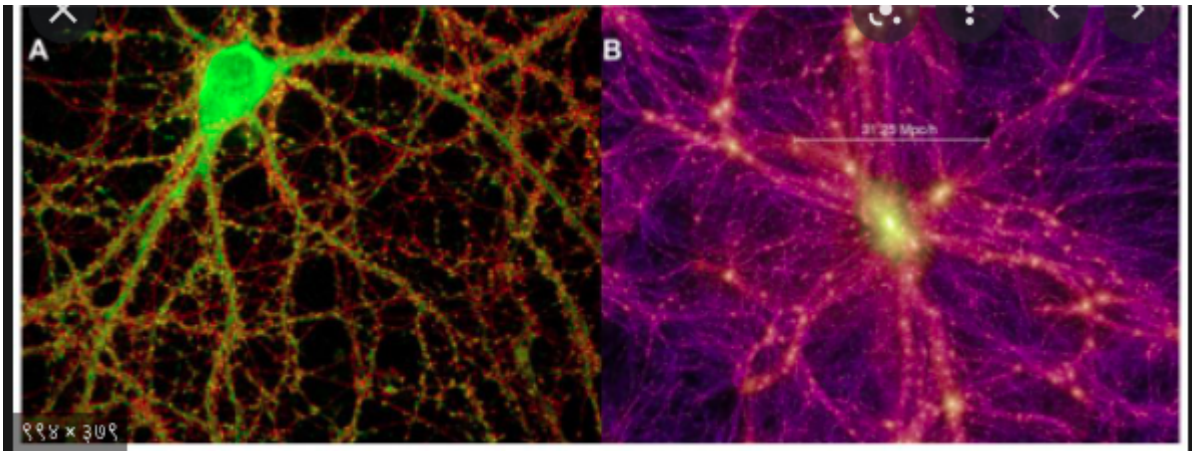
Night’s Neurons



The Weaver (June 2007, Mumbai)

Betwixt waking and eternity
the corridor twists
and turns
darkness peeps out
of many doors
left ajar.

Out in the open
a man steps out
of the lamplight
into the rain
he wears a long, black coat
his voice
is breaking
and his eyes are earnest.

He drives off
in a van, full of people
into mortal danger
there are no digits
on the number plate.

The corridor turns
like a thread for Sydney Carton
on a spindle

in his weary hands.
He reeks of midnight's oil.
The rain drips off
his shoulders
like a chill
into his heart
His lamp is burning
and the door is shut.

Wait Until Dark (February 2014, Mumbai)

The wings of night are spreading wide
the Morgul Lord *unmounts*
his hands are cold as ice
his breath
forks like a tongue
a sheet of flame, twisting and unwavering
his eyes the usual
empty sockets
hopelessly out of sync
for it is daylight that he haunts.

The night, the pristine, the undying
night
keeps us safe,
unmirrored
untouched
within Her bosom
for if any of Her creatures should see the day
be it an owl, besieged by ravens
or a candle flame
in a pile of amorphous wax
or a student grappling with a crowd
of random cadences and flashing rhythms
a fastening of fancies
into tens and fives
and sevens and their noises,

if one of us forgets a turning, strays
into the deepening shadows of daylight
and forgets the way,
the noonday sun will have his fill
and let us go
and She will find us
where She left us
in the midnight hour.

To Swell A Progress (March 2015, Mumbai)

A voice: What will you do
when you're free?
When the memory of this tiger and that
no longer snarls
at your gate?
When your bones have left their grating
at chalkboards
squeaking clean
allowing
no dust particles to settle with ease
at the counter
dark matter
white matter in a parallel universe
I answered - almost.
My eyes are tired
from too little widening
the muscles are stretched thin
now blowing out
at elliptical fault lines
cavernous as hot air balloons
and just as vacuous in their leaning
into the bitter air.

And yet, there is a way
of gentleness
a deathly stillness
that rips the sky open
and in between the seconds

uncountable millennia
leave just enough
breathing room
for a promised freedom.

Class (October 2001, Philadelphia Suburbs)

Your curses clamor through the walls,
the crickets shrill, the boiler's rumbling grin
a grin,
not quite a laugh, a grin
escapes the boiler room below
muscles in its chin
contort in heed, in heat,
to conversation's end.
Pieces of your soul are strewn like coals
into this empty din.

I read between the minutes of the night
freezing autumn night unquenched
the boiler's heat in rhapsody, in flame
in flame upon my back
in chill upon my feet.

I read between the minutes of the night
your face
caught in a struggle
with my swearing friend
I looked at you
with brave and tender eyes.

Other Poems by Acushla Sarswat