non-human entities shall use to emphasize the value of their memory. These stories are imprinted in these non-human elements that should be understood to know the ways of their inter-communication. In the essay "Risk," Nicole Walker writes, "Minimizing anxiety doesn't reduce scarcity, it merely reduces the appearances of risk." (273) She exemplifies that human with their identity 'I' as a part of language and as a part of their actions has defined their behavior of extracting and accumulation. Humans have created a comfortable niche for themselves and are thus, deaf to the sufferings of the environment. They save one species to justify their actions of killing many species altogether. The moment language breaks its hierarchical pattern and the hypocrisy of 'I,' only then can the weird becomes acceptable and useful to people. Our language has to accept and write about what is flawed and fractured in our world, only then we can embrace the reality.

Priscilla Wald in her essay "Coda- Virus," explores the idea of how the microbes are separated from the humans and accused as an outside attacker, wherein, they breed in the environments created by human race. Viruses are not deliberating the concept of survival, rather they breed, survive and attack because of the changing environment. Thus, accusing microbes of surviving on humans overlooks the human folly of creating inapt environmental conditions.

DEEPTI TIWARI
Regional Institute of Education, NCERT, Ajmer

WHY STORIES WORK: THE EVOLUTIONARY AND COGNITIVE ROOTS OF THE POWER OF NARRATIVE. By Somdev Chatterjee. Chennai, Notion Press, 2023. 112 pp.

Somdev Chatterjee's book offers an insight into the art of storytelling by discussing the importance of story and story structure. He tries to answer questions like: What makes a story? Why it captures our attention? And how the experience of consuming a story relates to other life experiences? He emphasizes the power stories have on the human mind by saying, "stories are not only, or even primarily about entertainment. They have a life-and-death importance for us." (8) Stories have the power to wield magic; thus, tracing their origin to understand their capacity to influence human minds forms the essence of this book. Chatterjee does so by taking the readers on an engaging journey through the intricate workings of storytelling. The book delves into the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that make narratives universally compelling and explores how stories shape our identities, influence our perceptions, and foster empathy. The author scrutinizes these ideas by dividing the book into four chapters. The first chapter, 'Tell it like your life depends on it,' traces the emergence of storytelling and argues how storytelling evolved following evolutionary pressures. The author explains the pleasures humans find in stories and storytelling and how stories have become complex over time. He does so by using Yuval Noah Harrari's understanding of "inter-subjective realities." The belief of the people around some entities build their reality, thus shaping their ability to cooperate and collaborate in the real world. Chatterjee further explains how the social hierarchy built by human beings forms a part of their meta-reality and how dealing with these complex meta-realities becomes essential to pass it on as "critically important knowledge." (21) Here, stories provide us with an avenue to act as "valuable guides of meta-realities that we have to negotiate in life." (22) The author further points out that in our urge to know about the world, one primal question that instigates us is how one should live in this world? Human beings have passed on this knowledge as embodied knowledge—one that can be acted out but cannot be put into words and somewhere between articulated knowledge and embodied knowledge, stories exist. Chatterjee also explains the concepts of "memory conformity" and "memory bias" by pointing at storytelling's function of integrating an individual into a group and the telling and retelling of the stories by the

group members, making the other members confirm the claims of an individual belonging to that group. Stories thus offer a shared reality within which life experiences make sense. Since information and knowledge are crucial to human functioning, we rely on stories as it helps us to navigate the world around us.

In the second chapter, 'Learning to inhabit unreal heroes', the author discusses Richard Dawkins' idea of mental simulation as a learning technique. Just like organisms that can simulate possible future scenarios have an added advantage over others in survival, constructing stories in our minds offers us an opportunity to enter into a simulation that helps us make decisions in real life. He stresses how simulation allows us to see the world from another person's point of view and helps us realize that their viewpoints might be different from our own. Literary fiction offers a pleasant way to understand the characters' changing mental states leading us to empathize and adopt multiple viewpoints. The author has discussed the question of how fictional worlds help in creating real emotions from an evolutionary perspective in this chapter. In doing so, he has discussed Brian Boyd's book, *On the Origin of Stories*. However, Chatterjee differs from Brian Boyd's assumption on two issues—firstly, by pointing out that "Our emotional systems can distinguish between true and fictional narratives and our emotional responses are modulated by our knowledge of that distinction." (44) and secondly by emphasizing on "our capacity to respond to fictional narratives" (44) as beneficial because our emotional response to any narrative depends on our belief in it. He also stresses that people do not mistake stories for reality but react emotionally to them as they allow them certain advantages. Chatterjee seeks to discuss these advantages while also offering an understanding of ontogeny. He looks into why human beings have emotional responses to real-life situations, and points out that recent studies in psychology have pointed out that "division between thinking and feeling is not as clear-cut as we commonly believe." (44) He further points out that the emotions displayed by our body in a particular situation have been dependent on simulation. "Simulation are almost always multi-modal" (45) and thus, offers us a benefit to survive in real life by helping us devise and recognize the solutions. In explaining our pleasures in seeing and reading about a situation in the fictional world of cinema or literature that human beings would never want to witness in their own life, the author puts forward the notion of play. Children's engagement in role-playing games since childhood has helped them derive pleasure and learn and hone their skills. In this process, "the children practice not only how to act, but also how to feel." (47) Two contradictory emotions are experienced in role-playing games—the pretend emotion and the real pleasure— and this capacity of an individual to experience contradictory emotions simultaneously makes stories of painful situations or fear interesting to the audiences. The author also discusses why people enjoy fear. In this context, he talks about our bodies' response to fear. Fear gives the audience a sense of accomplishment as "our minds know that the threat is not real, but our bodies don't." (50) The chapter ends by asking whether narrative form is fundamental to how we think or experience reality. It is an important intervention since, according to some authors, mental simulation of social interaction might be one of the reasons for the emergence of consciousness and these simulations are primarily in narrative form.

In the third chapter, 'Maps of experienced reality,' the author tries to understand the reasons for the universality in the theme of the stories and whether some elements in a story influence our experiences in real life. Using psychologists Fritz Heider and Marianne Simmel's study, Chatterjee points out that humans are inclined to create a narrative about whatever they see. Though human beings consider themselves to have a good understanding of the things happening around them, they are mostly unaware of the radical changes in their surroundings. Thus, human beings see and interpret the world according to the goals they have in their life and so, the narrative framework sticks in their mind deeply as it helps them experience reality. Chatterjee claims that we see reality in terms of what matters to us, and hence, our perception of the world is loaded with value judgements related to survival and reproduction. Since life is complex, finding solutions to world problems with our own consciousness is not so easy; therefore, there are gaps in what we believe in and what we actually do.

In storytelling, these gaps serve as a marker to introduce the audiences to the complex life of a protagonist. Storytellers thus can shape the characters and control the audiences' minds into sympathizing or empathizing with them. The pleasure of discovery the audience experiences in going through the life of a protagonist is heart-wrenching and fulfilling.

In the fourth and final chapter of the book 'How stories work,' Chatterjee starts with one of Ramachandran's lectures referring to "visual art as lawful distortions from reality to optimally stimulate the pleasure centres of the brain." (79) Chatterjee claims that stories can also be seen similarly. He talks about the discovery of mirror neurons in the late 1990s by Italian scientist Giacomo Rizzolatti and how "they have been linked to the development of empathy, social interactions and the evolution of language." (80) These mirror neurons are essential in storytelling as they help an individual watching the characters on stage and screen mimic their actions internally. Chatterjee refers to Dutch ethologist Nikolas Tinbergen's discovery of 'supernormal stimulus' and how it has become a vital storytelling element. Human beings are more attracted to those stories, which might exaggerate the things available in real life or are sometimes beyond reality. Since the world of stories allows audiences to chart an unfamiliar territory with opportunities and dangers, they remain interested in them. Human beings seek patterns to make sense of the information around them. The same logic applies to stories. In stories, "patterns create expectations which can then be subverted or contrasted with other patterns." (88) Chatterjee cites the popularity of stories from the detective genre as an example to illustrate how pattern detection and puzzle solving are inherent elements of such stories. The author points out that "in order to keep their audience engaged, storytellers do not need to deliver satisfaction, but only the promise of it." (92) This way, the storytellers keep the audiences engaged through hours of content without providing a concrete resolution but with a hook so that the viewers stay glued to the narrative. By referring to Ramachandran's experiment of 'Martian alphabets'- Bouba and Kiki, he points out that the parts of the brain processing visual inputs are distinct from the parts of the brain processing the aural inputs.

However, since some parts of the brain can perform a meta-analysis to find a common quality between the auditory and visual inputs, most people identify the rounded shape with Bouba and the jagged one with Kiki. Thus, the engagement of human beings with abstract thoughts or metaphors might be related to the human brain's ability for cross-modal abstraction, which also influences our responses to a narrative. Chatterjee further discusses Ramachandran's idea of "Perceptual Problem Solving" and how the process of visual perception is linked with human beings' interest in solving puzzles. Since puzzle-solving provides audiences pleasure, so storytellers employ devices like "temporal ellipses, non-linear narratives, multiple (and sometimes mutually contradictory) points of view and unreliable narrators" (96) to make stories puzzle-like. The author also emphasizes Ramachandran's notion of 'peak-shift' by stressing audiences' interest in watching animated films and how many genres like mythological, science fiction, and fantasy survive despite deviating from reality. Chatterjee brings in behavioural economist Daniel Kahneman's understanding to point out how the ending of a story matters in the storytelling process. So, while discussing Kahneman's idea of the experienced self and remembering self, the author points out that since the remembering self helps in making significant decisions in life and acts as a storyteller so stories have a powerful influence on the human mind as it helps in making sense of our daily lives.

In conclusion, one can say that Chatterjee's book does offer a captivating blend of academic rigour and accessible prose, making it an engaging read for both scholars and general readers. By skillfully exploring storytelling themes from an evolutionary and psychological perspective, Chatterjee successfully explores the importance of stories in identity formation and social change. The author does so by putting together theoretical concepts, empirical research, and real-world examples from the fields of neuroscience, psychology and films, providing a well-rounded exploration of storytelling's profound impact on human minds. Chatterjee's interdisciplinary approach enriches the book, offering a comprehensive understanding of narrative's significance from multiple perspectives. As

Chatterjee rightly expounds towards the end of the book, the evolutionary approach "acts as a bridge between science and literary or cinema studies, integrating them both into the more general study of human experience." (104) Chatterjee's interdisciplinary approach enriches the book, offering a comprehensive understanding of narrative's significance from multiple perspectives.

SUSHMITA PANDIT
Jadavpur University, Kolkata

THE ORIGINS OF KANT'S AESTHETICS. By Robert R Clewis. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. 265 pp.

What is beauty? Is it possible to have a coherent theory of aesthetics that holds well across time and space? While these questions have been quite tricky to address, scholars of aesthetics have turned to Immanuel Kant's 1790 book *Critique of Judgment*, also known as the *Third Critique*, to anchor their questions about taste and pleasure along with beauty. And quite rightly so, for the debates about whether something is universally beautiful or inherently beautiful – to give one of the many debates about art and its interpretation – can all be traced to the way Kant formulated them in the 18th century. These debates are far from being anywhere close to being resolved and in fact, if anything, they have only got richer with time. Yet, there is no turning away from Kant's legacy in the domain of theorising art. A new book, *The Origins of Kant's Aesthetics* by Robert R Clewis, approaches this legacy from a rather unique standpoint. Rather than interpret Kant for the contemporary expressions of art, it seeks to put together the different components of Kant's thought by unpacking his argument along the lines of different binaries and shifts as visible in his writings. Clewis consults various kinds of materials such as letters, notes, and marginalia to document the complex nature of questions that Kant first articulated, questions that still baffle scholars and audiences of art.

The binaries or shifts that Clewis considers are: art/nature, intellectual beauty/free beauty, aesthetic perfection/aesthetic ideas, laws of intuition/free play, and aesthetic experience as freedom/morality. Each chapter begins with a specific example from art and finds its way to Kant's observations about the analysis that that example lends itself to. With a consultation of a wide range of sources, Clewis investigates the influence of British and German philosophers on Kant. The resulting book is a dense history of aesthetics and a close reading of Kant's philosophy at the same time – which makes it interesting to scholars who are quite familiar with Kant's predecessors and contemporaries as well as with the work of scholars who specialise on Kant. However, it might prove to be a compass to young scholars as well who are beginning to navigate Kant's philosophy.

Overall, the readers will be intrigued by Clewis's framing of themes in Kant's work. For example, do rules play a role in aesthetics? Is it helpful to see Kant as a formalist and in what way? How are beauty and goodness related? Is artistic genius about freedom or does it operate under some kind of constraints? How can one classify the different art forms? How is the sublime related to morality? Does beauty involve a theorisation of ugliness as well? Each of these questions has fascinating implications for readers and researchers in comparative literature for these questions are likely to enable further reflections on how beauty is processed differently in readers and writers, artists and audiences across time and space.

To focus on one example from the book, let us turn to the idea of normativity. Clewis begins with a review of a piece of music which ripped apart a performance. The review is by Edward Robinson and the review is of Maurice Ravel's piece *Boléro*. Clewis finds the negative review to be an occasion to foreground the question of standards of aesthetic judgement: are they personal or are they univer-