

Navigating from Textual Realm to Social Realities: Narrative Immersion as a Catalyst for Social Cognitive Change

Mariya John^{#1}

^{#1}*Student Scholar, Department of Education, University of Calicut,
Wayanad, Kerala, India*

¹mariyajohney@gmail.com,

Abstract:

This paper synthesizes cognitive poetics and social psychology to propose a socio-cognitive model of narrative influence. It argues that narrative immersion, or "transportation," is the primary mechanism through which fiction modifies a reader's social schemas and attitudes. The model outlines a three-phase process: deictic shift and schema suspension, empathetic simulation, and attitude realignment. By examining how linguistic cues build immersive "text worlds," this paper explains how fiction can bypass cognitive resistance to foster cultural empathy and influence social cognition, demonstrating narrative's role as a tool for social-cognitive change.

Keywords—*Cognitive Poetics, Narrative Immersion, Social Cognition, Narrative Transportation, Attitude Change*

I. INTRODUCTION

The act of reading literature, long venerated as a pillar of cultural and intellectual life, is frequently subjected to a false dichotomy, bifurcated into the realms of aesthetic delectation and didactic instruction. This paper contests such a division, positing that the cognitive encounter with a literary text is neither a passive reception nor an insulated act, but rather a potent form of social simulation with demonstrable consequences for real-world attitudes and beliefs. It advances the thesis that narrative immersion, that profound experience of being absorbed into a story, of feeling "inside" it is the pivotal mechanism through which fictional worlds can recalibrate an individual's comprehension of the actual social world. This inquiry deliberately pivots from traditional literary criticism, with its focus on textual exegesis, to embrace a social science orientation centered on the psychological processes and sociological outcomes of reader engagement.¹

To construct this argument, this paper amalgamates two formidable theoretical paradigms: cognitive poetics and narrative transportation theory. Cognitive poetics, an interdisciplinary endeavor that applies cognitive science to literary analysis, furnishes the analytical instruments to understand *how* texts are architected to invite immersion.² It reveals that specific linguistic features are not mere

stylistic embellishments but are, in fact, fundamental "world-builders" that steer the reader's mental operations.¹ In a complementary vein, narrative transportation theory, a framework originating in social psychology, explains the *consequences* of this immersion. It defines the state of being "transported" as an integrative fusion of attention, emotion, and mental imagery that can precipitate significant and enduring alterations in a person's beliefs and attitudes—a phenomenon termed narrative persuasion.⁴

By bridging these intellectual domains, this paper proposes a novel socio-cognitive model that delineates a lucid causal trajectory from textual cue to attitudinal shift. The process, it argues, commences with the reader's cognitive construction of a mental "text world," an act which can provisionally suspend ordinary critical faculties and thereby create a space for novel perspectives. Within this immersive state, the reader partakes in a profound simulation of social scenarios, vicariously inhabiting the thoughts and emotions of characters. This empathetic engagement, in turn, possesses the capacity to reshape the reader's underlying social schemas, particularly those pertaining to empathy, stereotypes, and attitudes toward social in-groups and out-groups.

This paper will unfold across four subsequent sections. Section II, the Literature Survey,

undertakes a comprehensive review of the core tenets of cognitive poetics, narrative transportation theory, and extant research on narrative's role in social cognition. Section III presents the paper's central contribution: a three-phase socio-cognitive model of narrative influence that synthesizes these disparate fields into a cohesive process. Section IV, the Discussion, applies this model to illustrative exemplars from contemporary fiction to demonstrate its analytical utility in explaining how narratives function as instruments for social commentary and ideological critique. Finally, Section V offers a conclusion, summarizing the model's implications and charting directions for future empirical and theoretical exploration.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

This section erects the theoretical scaffolding for the paper's central model by reviewing three distinct yet complementary bodies of research. It first delves into the linguistic architecture of immersion through the lens of cognitive poetics, then scrutinizes the psychological state of immersion via narrative transportation theory, and finally, connects this experiential phenomenon to its real-world consequences in the domain of social cognition.

A. The Architecture of Immersion: Core Tenets of Cognitive Poetics

Cognitive poetics signals a paradigm shift in literary studies, migrating from a purely text-centric analysis to an investigation of the mental processes intrinsic to the act of reading.³ It is predicated on the foundational axiom that literature is composed in language and its effects are realized in the human mind; ergo, its proper study must forge a connection between linguistic structures and the embodied, cognitive capabilities of the reader.¹ This perspective reframes literature not as an esoteric artifact but as a specific manifestation of the general cognitive faculties humans employ to navigate the world, thereby establishing an indissoluble link between literary experience and human cognition.¹

A pivotal framework within cognitive poetics is **Text World Theory (TWT)**, which offers a systematic model of how readers construct mental representations of a narrative. Formulated initially by Paul Werth and subsequently elaborated by scholars

like Joanna Gavins, the theory posits that as individuals process discourse, they erect a cognitive representation of the world the text delineates—the "text world".² This mental construct is distinct from the immediate, real-world context of the reading act, designated the "discourse world." The text world is populated with entities and governed by the spatio-temporal parameters established by the text, creating a palpable sense of immersion for the reader.¹

The construction of these text worlds is not a haphazard affair but is meticulously guided by specific linguistic cues that function as "world-builders." Among the most instrumental of these are **deixis** and **focalization**. Deixis pertains to linguistic elements whose interpretation is contingent upon the context of the utterance, such as personal pronouns ('I', 'you'), spatial adverbs ('here', 'there'), and temporal markers ('now', 'then').² These deictic terms establish the narrative's cognitive and perceptual anchor point, or *origo*. When a reader engages with a first-person narrative, for instance, they execute a "deictic shift," cognitively transposing their own center of consciousness from their physical reality to the spatio-temporal and personal origo of the narrator within the text world. This cognitive maneuver, as described by **Deictic Shift Theory (DST)**, is a fundamental prerequisite for immersion.² **Focalization**, a concept borrowed from narratology, refers to the perspective or viewpoint through which the narrative's events are filtered. Whether the story is recounted from an omniscient, third-person perspective or is tightly focused through the circumscribed consciousness of a single character, focalization modulates the flow of information and sculpts the reader's alignment and emotional response to the narrative events. Empirical work has confirmed this, demonstrating that first-person narration typically elicits higher reported immersion than its third-person equivalent, likely because it reduces the cognitive load of tracking multiple perspectives.²

Finally, the process of world-building relies profoundly on **schema theory**. Schemas are the pre-existing knowledge structures, or mental frameworks, that individuals possess regarding concepts, situations, and events. During reading, individuals activate pertinent schemas to comprehend the text, make inferences, and populate narrative gaps that are not explicitly articulated. A sentence like "She ordered a coffee at the counter,"

for example, activates a 'café' schema, empowering the reader to infer a host of unstated details about the environment. Cognitive poetics astutely recognizes that while schemas are indispensable for comprehension, literature's potency often resides in its capacity to challenge, disrupt, or "refresh" these very schemas, compelling the reader to accommodate new information and perspectives. This dynamic interplay, the reliance on existing schemas for comprehension and the potential for narratives to modify them is central to apprehending how fiction influences real-world beliefs.

B. The Psychology of Being Transported: Narrative Transportation Theory

While cognitive poetics elucidates the linguistic triggers of immersion, **Narrative Transportation Theory** furnishes the dominant psychological framework for understanding the immersive state itself and its persuasive sequelae.⁴ Developed by Melanie Green and Timothy Brock, the theory conceptualizes transportation as "a distinct mental process, an integrative melding of attention, imagery, and feelings".⁴ Drawing an analogy from Richard Gerrig, it likens the experience to physical travel: the reader, or "traveler," leaves their world of origin behind to journey to the narrative world, returning somewhat transformed by the experience.⁴ This state is characterized by a convergence of mental systems, wherein cognitive capacities become intensely focused on the events unfolding in the story, often culminating in a diminished awareness of one's immediate surroundings and the passage of time.⁴ The experience of transportation is multidimensional, comprising three core components: focused attention, emotional engagement, and the generation of vivid mental imagery.⁵ It is distinct from related psychological states like "flow," which can be applied to any activity, or "identification," which centers specifically on characters. Transportation is a holistic absorption into the narrative world in its entirety, encompassing its plot, setting, and characters.⁴ The intensity of this experience is modulated by several factors, including the quality and perceived realism of the narrative, as well as individual reader differences, such as their dispositional tendency to become absorbed in stories (a trait known as

"transportability"), their level of empathy, and their need for affect.⁴ Qualitative studies corroborate this, with readers reporting that immersion arises from "mental simulation and narrative transportation" as well as emotional empathy and a sense of "situational grounding" in the story's world.²

A primary consequence of this profound immersion is **narrative persuasion**: the process by which stories can shift a person's real-world beliefs and attitudes to become more congruent with the narrative's content.⁵ The central mechanism proposed to explain this effect is the **reduction of counterarguing**. When an individual is highly transported, their cognitive resources are fully allocated to processing the narrative following the plot, simulating character perspectives, and generating mental images. This cognitive load leaves fewer resources available for critically scrutinizing the story's claims or generating arguments against its implicit messages.⁴ In this state of attenuated vigilance, the reader becomes more receptive to the perspectives and information presented within the narrative, rendering attitude change more probable. This process is qualitatively different from the logical, argument-based evaluation described in traditional persuasion models like the Elaboration Likelihood Model; it operates through experiential immersion rather than critical deliberation.⁴

C. The Social Mind: Narrative's Role in Social Cognition

The final theoretical pillar connects the immersive experience of reading to its tangible effects on how individuals perceive and interact within their social world. **Social cognition** refers to the broad constellation of mental processes that enable us to understand the intentions, emotions, and behaviors of others, and to navigate complex social milieus. A burgeoning body of research suggests that engaging with narrative fiction serves as a powerful form of training for these social cognitive faculties.

One of the most robustly documented effects is the linkage between fiction reading and enhanced **Theory of Mind (ToM)**, which is the capacity to attribute mental states; beliefs, desires, intentions; to oneself and to others.⁸ Pioneering studies by Kidd and Castano demonstrated that reading complex literary fiction, as opposed to popular fiction or

nonfiction, temporarily ameliorated performance on ToM tasks.⁸ The proposed explanation is that literary fiction, with its ambiguous characters and intricate psychological landscapes, necessitates that readers constantly engage in inferential work to apprehend character motivations, thus exercising the same cognitive "muscles" utilized in real-world social interpretation.

Beyond the cognitive faculty of understanding others, narrative immersion is strongly correlated with **empathy**, which encompasses both **cognitive empathy** (the ability to adopt another's perspective) and **affective empathy** (the capacity to share another's feelings).⁸ Narratives provide a unique platform for this process by inviting readers to simulate the subjective experiences of characters. Drawing on theories of embodied cognition, scholars contend that readers do not merely observe a character's sadness; they mentally and, to some degree, physiologically simulate that emotional state. This vicarious experience, as described by the "fiction feeling hypothesis," can engage the brain's affective empathy network, making the fictional experience feel emotionally resonant and veridical. Crucially, this empathetic engagement can have profound consequences for attitudes toward social **in-groups and out-groups**. Research has demonstrated that immersion in narratives featuring characters from different cultural backgrounds can foster "cultural empathy" and lead to more positive and less prejudiced out-group attitudes.⁹ A sequential mediation model suggests that exposure to foreign literature enhances a reader's emotional investment in the narrative, which in turn elevates their cultural empathy, ultimately culminating in more favorable views of the out-group.⁹ In this manner, narrative functions as a conduit across social divides, allowing readers to safely inhabit the perspective of "the other" and recognize a shared humanity that transcends group boundaries.

The synthesis of these three fields reveals a powerful, though often implicit, causal pathway. The linguistic features detailed by cognitive poetics; such as deixis and focalization are not merely descriptive devices; they are the cognitive triggers that initiate the deictic shift necessary for a reader to enter a text world. This cognitive act of shifting is the foundational step into the psychological state of narrative transportation. Thus, the principles of cognitive poetics provide the micro-level

mechanisms that produce the macro-level psychological state described by narrative transportation theory.

Furthermore, a nuanced understanding resolves an apparent contradiction in the literature. While narrative transportation theory suggests that immersion involves a loss of access to real-world knowledge and a reduction in critical thought⁴, cognitive poetics emphasizes that readers constantly draw upon real-world schemas to make sense of a text. The resolution lies in viewing transportation not as a simple shutdown of reality-testing, but as a sophisticated cognitive triage. To become immersed, a reader must selectively activate schemas relevant to comprehension (e.g., how a conversation works) while simultaneously inhibiting schemas that would directly contradict the narrative's premises (e.g., the fact that magic is not real). This dynamic process of selective activation and inhibition explains *why* counterarguing is reduced: the cognitive effort required to maintain the fictional world leaves fewer resources available to constantly vet every narrative proposition against the entirety of one's real-world knowledge base.

III. METHODOLOGY

Building upon the theoretical foundations established in the preceding section, this paper proposes a three-phase socio-cognitive model of narrative influence. This model synthesizes concepts from cognitive poetics, narrative transportation theory, and social psychology into a coherent, sequential process that explains how the act of reading fiction can lead to lasting changes in a reader's social cognition and attitudes. The model posits a pathway from initial cognitive engagement with the text, through deep experiential simulation, to the final integration of new perspectives into the reader's social-cognitive framework.

Phase 1: Deictic Shift and Schema Suspension

The process of narrative influence commences with the reader's ingress into the story world, a phase initiated and governed by linguistic cues. The foundational mechanism is the **deictic shift**, a cognitive reorientation where the reader transposes their perceptual and psychological center from their own immediate reality (the discourse world) to the spatio-temporal and personal origo established

within the narrative (the text world).² This shift is not merely metaphorical; it is a genuine cognitive act triggered by deictic markers ('I,' 'here,' 'now') and sustained by the narrative's focalization, which directs the reader's perspective.²

This cognitive relocation is the portal to the psychological state of transportation. A cardinal feature of this state is the "willing suspension of disbelief," which this model reframes as a functional cognitive process: the **temporary down-regulation of critical faculties** and the **inhibition of access to contradictory real-world schemas**.⁴ When a reader becomes absorbed in a story, their cognitive resources are overwhelmingly dedicated to constructing and maintaining the text world. This intense focus makes it cognitively costly to simultaneously engage in rigorous counterarguing; the process of actively challenging narrative claims against one's existing knowledge. The result is a temporary cognitive state of receptivity, a protected space where novel ideas, unfamiliar perspectives, and challenging social realities can be entertained without being immediately filtered or rejected by pre-existing biases and beliefs. This phase, therefore, establishes the necessary cognitive conditions for potential attitude change.

Phase 2: Empathetic Simulation and Vicarious Experience

Once the reader is immersed within the text world and their critical faculties are temporarily attenuated, the second phase of deep simulation begins. This phase is characterized by the reader's active and embodied engagement with the narrative's characters and events. Drawing on theories of embodied cognition and the "fiction feeling hypothesis," this model posits that readers do not merely process information about characters; they **vicariously experience** their cognitive and emotional lives. This is a multifaceted simulation that engages both cognitive and affective systems.

On a cognitive level, the reader actively employs their **Theory of Mind** to track characters' beliefs, intentions, and desires, effectively practicing social cognition in the complex and dynamic "problem space" of the narrative.⁸ On an affective level, the reader engages in **empathetic simulation**, partaking in the characters' emotional journeys. The linguistic and narrative structures that foreground a character's

internal state facilitate a powerful connection, allowing the reader to feel a character's joy, fear, or sorrow as if it were their own. This process is believed to be underpinned by neural mechanisms that mirror the emotional and sensorimotor states of others, suggesting that the brain processes these vicarious experiences in ways that are analogous to real-life experiences. The rich, contextualized emotional and social "data" acquired through this simulation becomes a potent input for the reader's own social-cognitive models.

Phase 3: Attitude Realignment and Integration

The final phase of the model elucidates how the temporary, immersive experience of reading translates into durable, real-world changes in the reader's attitudes and beliefs. The potent emotional connections forged during the empathetic simulation of Phase 2 attach significant affective weight to the narrative's content and characters. This emotional resonance is the catalyst for attitude realignment.

When a reader develops a strong empathetic bond or identifies with a character, particularly one from a social out-group, the positive effect associated with that individual character can be generalized to the broader social category they represent. This process can directly modify the reader's underlying **social schema** for that group, supplanting a simplistic, stereotype-based representation with a more nuanced, humanized, and empathetic one.⁹ This mechanism aligns with empirical findings on **cultural empathy**, which demonstrate a sequential pathway: the emotional investment in a narrative (Phase 2) fosters a broader capacity for empathy toward different cultures, which in turn predicts more positive and less prejudiced out-group attitudes.⁹ The beliefs, feelings, and perspectives adopted during the immersive experience are not discarded upon finishing the book; they are integrated into the reader's long-term social-cognitive framework, leading to a lasting realignment of their social world.

This three-phase process, however, is not merely a one-way, linear progression. It can function as a powerful reinforcing feedback loop. An initial experience of narrative immersion that leads to an attitude shift modifies the reader's foundational social schemas. These updated schemas then become part of the "discourse world" knowledge that the reader brings to their next reading experience. This

may increase their personal relevance to similar narratives, making them more susceptible to transportation in the future and priming them for further attitude reinforcement and consolidation. In this way, a sustained engagement with fiction can create a developmental trajectory of social-cognitive growth, where each immersive experience builds upon the last.

Furthermore, the efficacy of this entire process is moderated by a crucial sociological variable: the relationship between the narrative's content and the reader's pre-existing **cultural schemas**. The model's entry point; the deictic shift into the text world, is contingent on a degree of **schema congruence**. If a narrative's world-building, character motivations, or core premises are too radically incongruent with a reader's fundamental cultural beliefs and frameworks, the immersive process may fail. Instead of schema suspension, the reader may experience a form of cognitive dissonance that short-circuits transportation and triggers heightened counterarguing and rejection of the text. This implies that narrative persuasion is most potent when it operates at the "edge" of a reader's existing worldview, introducing perspectives that are novel enough to be transformative but not so alien as to be cognitively inaccessible or immediately dismissed. This adds a vital layer of socio-cultural context to the universal psychological mechanisms of the model.

IV. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The proposed socio-cognitive model provides a robust framework for analyzing the real-world social impact of immersive narratives. By tracing the pathway from linguistic cue to cognitive immersion to attitudinal change, the model illuminates how fiction functions as a powerful tool for social commentary, stereotype reduction, and the construction of collective identity. This section applies the model to illustrative examples from literature known for its profound social impact, demonstrating how these texts operate as engines of social-cognitive change.

A. Challenging Social Stereotypes and Modifying Out-Group Schemas

One of the most significant social functions of narrative is its capacity to foster empathy for individuals and groups outside of one's own experience, thereby challenging and modifying entrenched social stereotypes. Novels such as Angie Thomas's *The Hate U Give*¹⁰ and Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*¹¹ are prime examples of this process in action.

According to the model, these texts operate by first inducing a powerful **deictic shift** into the first-person perspective of a protagonist from a marginalized community. In *The Hate U Give*, the reader is invited to inhabit the consciousness of Starr Carter, a Black teenager navigating the dual worlds of her predominantly Black neighborhood and her affluent, mostly white private school. The narrative's linguistic construction of Starr's voice and perspective facilitates a deep immersion into her world (Phase 1). This immersion temporarily suspends the pre-existing, often stereotypical, schemas a reader from a majority group might hold about Black youth, gang culture, or police violence.

Once transported, the reader engages in an intense **empathetic simulation** of Starr's experiences (Phase 2). They vicariously witness the traumatic police shooting of her childhood friend, Khalil, and share her fear, grief, and anger. They experience her internal conflict as she decides whether to speak out, facing pressure from both her community and the authorities. This vicarious journey provides a rich, emotionally resonant counter-narrative to the simplistic and often dehumanizing portrayals of such events in media. The reader does not just learn about systemic racism; they *feel* its impact through their empathetic connection to Starr.

This profound emotional investment is the catalyst for **attitude realignment** (Phase 3). The positive effect and deep identification with Starr are generalized, fostering a broader cultural empathy for the Black community and a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of racial injustice and the Black Lives Matter movement. The narrative effectively replaces abstract political debates with a concrete, human story, leading to a durable modification of the reader's social schemas and a more empathetic and informed stance on issues of race and justice in the real world.⁹

B. The Narrative Construction of Identity and Ideology

Beyond challenging specific stereotypes, immersive narratives play a crucial role in shaping broader ideological frameworks and social identities. This function is particularly evident in dystopian fiction, such as George Orwell's *1984*¹² or Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*¹³, which use the construction of immersive fictional worlds to critique contemporary social and political trends. This aligns with the principles of **narrative sociology**, which recognizes that stories are fundamental to how societies give meaning to collective life and construct shared realities.²

In *1984*, Orwell employs precise linguistic and narrative techniques to transport the reader into the oppressive text world of Oceania. The deictic center is anchored firmly in the consciousness of Winston Smith, and the narrative's focalization ensures that the reader only knows what Winston knows, creating a powerful sense of claustrophobia and paranoia. This immersive entry into a world of constant surveillance, historical revisionism, and psychological manipulation (Phase 1) effectively brackets the reader's own experience of living in a democratic society.

Within this totalitarian world, the reader undergoes a vicarious experience of ideological coercion (Phase 2). They simulate Winston's struggle to maintain his individuality and his grasp on objective reality in the face of the Party's overwhelming power. The emotional arc of the narrative from clandestine rebellion to eventual psychological annihilation in the Ministry of Love generates a profound negative affective response. This simulated experience of totalitarianism serves as a powerful cautionary tale.

The result is a process of **attitude realignment** that functions through negative reinforcement (Phase 3). The intense negative emotions associated with the text world of Oceania strengthen the reader's commitment to the values of freedom, truth, and individual autonomy in their own social world. The novel does not just present an argument against totalitarianism, it forces the reader to *experience* a simulation of it, thereby inoculating them against its ideological appeal. In this way, the narrative becomes a foundational text for shaping a liberal-

democratic identity, providing a shared cultural touchstone for understanding and resisting political oppression. The same mechanism applies to *The Handmaid's Tale*, where immersion in the theocratic, misogynistic world of Gilead serves to critique patriarchal power structures and galvanize feminist consciousness.

Table I summarizes the core theoretical argument of the paper, visually mapping the progression from linguistic mechanism to psychological process to social-cognitive outcome across the three phases of the proposed model.

TABLE I: Mechanisms of Narrative Immersion and their Social Cognitive Correlates

Phase of Immersion	Cognitive Poetic Mechanism (The 'How')	Psychological Process (The 'What')	Social Cognitive Outcome (The 'Effect')
1. Entry & Suspension	Deictic Shift; Focalization; Schema Activation	Transportation (Attention); Reduced Counterarguing; Suspension of Disbelief	Temporary bracketing of existing beliefs; Openness to new perspectives
2. Simulation & Experience	Text World Construction; Foregrounding	Emotional Engagement; Mental Imagery; Identification; Vicarious Experience	Empathetic Simulation (Cognitive & Affective); Acquisition of proxy social "data"
3. Integration & Change	Narrative Resonance; Thematic Coherence	Attitude Realignment; Story-Consistent Belief Formation	Schema Modification; Enhanced Cultural Empathy; Shift in out-group attitudes and social identity

V. CONCLUSION

This paper has advanced a socio-cognitive model of narrative influence, arguing that the immersive experience of reading fiction is a primary mechanism for shaping social cognition and attitudes. By synthesizing theoretical frameworks from cognitive poetics, social psychology, and narrative sociology, the model delineates a coherent, three-phase process that connects the micro-level linguistic features of a text to the macro-level social and psychological outcomes for the reader. The proposed pathway from (1) Deictic Shift and Schema Suspension, through

(2) Empathetic Simulation and Vicarious Experience, to (3) Attitude Realignment and Integration provide a comprehensive explanation for how fictional "text worlds" can profoundly alter an individual's understanding of their actual social world.

The central argument of this paper is that narrative immersion, far from being a form of simple escapism, is a fundamental and sophisticated cognitive process with demonstrable consequences. It is a form of social simulation that allows individuals to safely explore complex social scenarios, inhabit diverse perspectives, and vicariously experience the emotional lives of others. This process can bypass the cognitive resistance often associated with direct persuasion, leading to the modification of deeply held social schemas, the enhancement of empathy, the reduction of prejudice, and the formation of collective identities. Literature, through the mechanism of immersion, thus performs a vital social function, serving as a powerful engine for fostering understanding across cultural divides and for critically examining the ideological foundations of society.

Future Directions

The theoretical model proposed herein opens several promising avenues for future research. A primary direction is the empirical validation of the model's components and their sequential relationships.

- **Neurocognitive Studies:** The hypotheses of the model are amenable to testing using neuroimaging techniques. For instance, fMRI or EEG studies could measure neural activity in brain regions associated with the default mode network (implicated in self-projection and simulation), the empathy network (including the anterior insula and cingulate cortex), and the executive control network during different phases of immersive reading. Such research could provide direct neural evidence for the proposed processes of deictic shift, empathetic simulation, and the down-regulation of critical faculties.
- **Cross-Cultural Empirical Research:** The model highlights the moderating role of cultural

schemas, a factor that remains underexplored in narrative persuasion research. Future studies should systematically investigate how readers from different cultural backgrounds respond to the same narrative. By measuring levels of transportation, empathy, and attitude change across diverse populations, researchers can empirically test the concept of "schema congruence" and develop a more nuanced, culturally-situated understanding of narrative influence.

- **Application to New Media:** The principles of deictic shift and immersion are not limited to print media. The proliferation of interactive narratives, video games, and virtual reality (VR) presents new and even more potent platforms for narrative transportation.⁵ Future research should apply and adapt the socio-cognitive model to these media, exploring how user agency and embodied presence in virtual environments might amplify the mechanisms of empathetic simulation and attitude realignment.

By pursuing these lines of inquiry, scholars can continue to build a more comprehensive and empirically grounded understanding of the profound and enduring power of stories to shape the human mind and, by extension, the social world.

REFERENCES

- [1] P. Stockwell, *Cognitive Poetics: An Introduction*. Routledge, 2002.
- [2] D. A. Fajar, et al., "Transporting Minds: Analyzing Reader Immersion in Singer and Cole's Ghost Fleet Novel," in *Proceedings of the International Conference on Cultural Studies (ICCUS 2024)*, Surahapi and Widjaja, Eds. Atlantis Press, 2025, pp. 306-315.
- [3] C. Harrison and P. Stockwell, "Cognitive Poetics," in *The Bloomsbury Companion to Cognitive Linguistics*, J. Littlemore and J. R. Taylor, Eds. Bloomsbury, 2014, pp. 218-33.
- [4] M. C. Green and T. C. Brock, "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 79, no. 5, pp. 701-21, 2000.
- [5] T. van Laer, et al., "The Extended Transportation-Imagery Model: A Meta-Analysis of the Antecedents and Consequences of Consumers' Narrative Transportation,"

- Journal of Consumer Research, vol. 40, no. 5, pp. 797-817, 2014.
- [6] M. Galbraith, "Deictic Shift Theory," Patron Glossary, 2021. [Online]. Available: cse.buffalo.edu/~rapaport/galbraith2021.pdf.
- [7] P. Sánchez Carrasco, et al., "What I Can Do with the Right Version of You: The Impact of Narrative Perspective on Reader Immersion, and How (in)Formal Address Pronouns Influence Immersion Reports," Languages, vol. 9, no. 8, art. 265, 2024.
- [8] D. C. Kidd and E. Castano, "Reading Literary Fiction Improves Theory of Mind," Science, vol. 342, no. 6156, pp. 377-80, 2013.
- [9] Y. Zhou, et al., "The Influence of Exposure to Foreign Literature on Chinese Readers' Out-group Attitudes: The Sequential Mediating Role of Emotional Investment and Cultural Empathy," Frontiers in Psychology, vol. 15, 2024.
- [10] A. Thomas, The Hate U Give. Balzer + Bray, 2017.
- [11] H. Lee, To Kill a Mockingbird. J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1960.
- [12] G. Orwell, Nineteen Eighty-Four. Secker & Warburg, 1949.
- [13] M. Atwood, The Handmaid's Tale. McClelland and Stewart, 1985.
- [14] P. Werth, Text Worlds: Representing Conceptual Space in Discourse. Longman, 1999.
- [15] J. Gavins, Text World Theory: An Introduction. Edinburgh UP, 2007.