

# Currie, Gregory

Professor. The University of Nottingham, UK

Philosophers have for some time postulated mechanisms where by the contents of fictional stories, once imagined, may become the contents of readers' beliefs. A good deal of empirical work is now being done on the effects of immersion in a fictional world (sometimes called "transportation") and in particular the effects of this on belief. Does this empirical work help us to understand how what is imagined can turn into belief? We review the relevant studies and suggest that (a) the evidence for belief change through transportation is equivocal and (b) where it occurs, the mechanism may turn out to have no special relation to imagination, being explicable instead in terms of the reader's processing story content as conversationally relevant in the sense of Grice. If that is right, the focus of attention on fiction's capacity to change belief needs to shift from the way that imagination mutates into belief to the tendency of readers to treat authors as trustworthy in situations where there is little apparent reason for them to do so.