

which neither can win. Having reached a mutual "terrain d'entente," the Entity embarks the two on a voyage through time in quest of another body for Marianne. The problem is, understandably, that no one is truly willing to give up his or her body while still alive unless in acute danger. Thus Marianne is thrust into trial and tribulation. She passes from being a nineteenth-century school teacher on the verge of being shot by her former students to a sacrificial virgin in the year 470 AD who needs to escape from a dragon's gut. Each time a new body is found, the Entity tries to abandon Marianne to her new fate, usually none too promising. Marianne, though, will not compromise, much less sacrifice herself, and eventually the two return to the time of the original fight in the schoolyard. With 20/20 hindsight, Marianne and the Entity invade Christopher's brain and arrange the outcome of their fight to be such that it is Christopher, and not Marianne, who is in the supply closet at the precise moment at which the Entity makes contact.

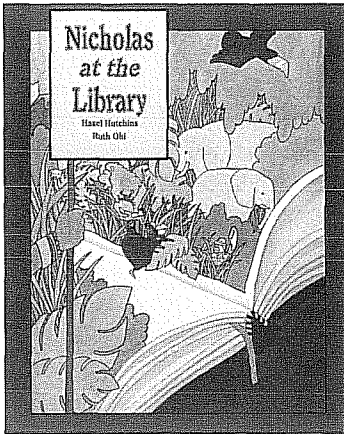
This very clever story of time-travel is interspersed with the author's own brand of "narrative travel" during which his voice jumps off the page to speak to the reader. Montpetit calls "Cut!" to ask the reader: "Have you ever dreamed you were falling down an elevator shaft?" (11). He explains the notion of time-travel with: "Take yourself, for example. Right now, you probably think you're stationary, your rear-end comfortably installed in your chair... But if the planet was invisible, you would appear to spin around its core at a speed of 1, 608 kilometres an hour" (15). And, once the lesson in physics is over, he suggests: "To get the full effect of the return trip, please read this chapter backwards" (28). He very audaciously interrupts the pursuit of the nineteenth-century school teacher to explain the rules of a card game that will enable readers to re-enact the scene together with friends! In short, Montpetit has gone far beyond the conventional limitations of literature to reach out and touch young readers. His story, as well as his technique, should readily entice an audience of any age.

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JOURNEYS OF MIND AND FANCY

Jeremy's decision. Ardyth Brott. Illus. Michael Martchenko. Oxford University Press, 1990. 32 pp., \$14.95 cloth. ISBN 0-19-540-775-X; **Nicholas at the library.** Hazel Hutchins. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick Press, 1990. Unpag., \$14.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-134-7, 1-55037-132-0; **Anniranni and Mollymishi the wild-haired doll.** C. Drew Lamm. Illus. Ruth Ohi. Annick

Press, 1990. Unpag., \$14.95, cloth. ISBN 1-55037-105-3; **Andrew and the wild bikes.** Allen Morgan. Illus. Steve Beinicke. Annick Press, 1990. Unpag., \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-083-9, 1-55037-082-0; **Jesse on the night train.** Richard Thompson. Illus. Eugenie Fernandes. Annick Press, 1990. Unpag., \$12.95, \$4.95 cloth, paper. ISBN 1-55037-093-6, 1-55037-094-4.

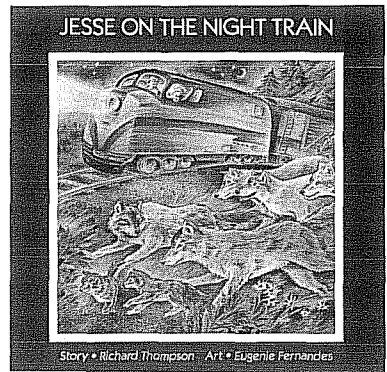


Hazel Hutchins' eponymous protagonist in *Nicholas at the library* makes a fabulous journey which begins in an ordinary fashion. His mother decides that a library visit is in order, a decision that definitely doesn't meet with the approval of exuberant Nicholas. True to form, he constructs a fort using the books in the children's department and, in the process, discovers a small chimpanzee hiding on a shelf in the O section. When Nicholas takes this interesting news to his mother, she rejects it as a figment of his imagination. The librarian, on the other hand, takes him seriously enough to consult her Head Librarian's manual. It

instructs them to don the cardboard press-out emergency ring in order to conduct a rapid search-and-rescue mission. Nicholas puts on the ring and he and the librarian are whisked off on a frantic series of trips into the worlds inside a multitude of children's books. After running the gamut of genres from classics to bedtime stories they finally restore the chimpanzee to his rightful place on the illustration of a birthday book which they then read together in a companionable way.

The librarian is a nifty, laid-back female! She is depicted at one point sitting comfortably on a stack of books on top of her desk eating cookies and sipping tea while the telephone receiver hangs off the hook. Her most endearing characteristic is the concerned way she addresses herself to Nicholas's problem. This is a friendly and lighthearted romp of a tale and the fantasy element is cleverly conceived. The illustrations are bright, clean and jaunty and the text, while a little long for a picture book, is fast-paced and amusing.

Richard Thompson propels Jesse into her fifth adventure in *Jesse on the night train*. Here she makes a dreamy journey through the night and through a fanciful



mountain landscape. Jesse is a curious child, so when her questions about the train she's travelling on aren't satisfactorily answered she decides to creep along to the engine to see for herself. The engineer is happy to have unexpected company and invites her to stay awhile. Soon strange things begin to happen – first, a herd of moose appear dancing to the music of their horns and later a pack of wolves chase the train. But it's the bee "the size of an ant's freckle" that finally rouses the engineer who roars at Jesse not to let it sting his train. The engineer is full of admiration at Jesse's masterful handling of the situation and they part amicably, Jesse returning to her peaceful berth and a worry-free sleep while the engineer continues his night watch.

Fernandes' lovely paintings of a train moving through a starry mountain landscape populated by secret night creatures are a perfect accompaniment to the story. Jesse is certainly a great role model for any child – she's thoughtful (delivers a snack to the engineer), curious, daring and resourceful.

Another late night jaunt is taken by Andrew, Morgan's clever kid detective in *Andrew and the wild bikes*. This zany tale is in the tradition of Morgan's previous Matthew titles. Andrew, who desperately wants a two-wheeled bike, fortuitously discovers that a herd of wild bikes have been rampaging through his parents' garden and sets out to track them. After laying a trail of flour in good old fairy-tale tradition, he locates their lair and surprises them in the midst of a riderless jamboree. At dawn he brings the now domesticated bike home to his surprised but accepting parents and claims it for his own. The notion of bikes as animate wild creatures (albeit garden pests) is an appealing and funny one and the raucous humour of the text is echoed by Beinicke's expressive cartoon-like characters.

Lamm moves to a daytime venue in *Anniranni and Mollymishi the wild-haired doll*. Anniranni is completely upstaged by her intrepid doll who precipitates a whole series of incidents before being retrieved by her owner. Anniranni's day begins uneventfully as she sallies forth pulling Mollymishi in her little red wagon. However, left alone for a moment, Mollymishi engineers her own fate by leaning over the edge of the wagon and inadvertently propelling it down the hill. Several incidents involving Dillip, the dog, and a Persian cat ensue before Mollymishi is flung back into the wagon and tumbled to a halt at Anniranni's feet. Her anxious owner then picks her up and takes her indoors for "two helpings of peas and quiet".

The occasional flashes of poetic language seem forced in what is essentially a straightforward adventure highly reminiscent of a Hollywood car chase-scene. Anniranni's character is never developed and Mollymishi exhibits merely a phlegmatic (expressionless in the illustrations) acceptance of events in keeping with her status as an inanimate object. The stylized illustrations certainly do little to promote the action of the story with their static bystanders and refined Victorian houses. Most readers will fail to respond either to Anniranni's concerns or the plight of her doll.

Jeremy travels the inner road to maturity in *Jeremy's decision* by flouting family tradition in making a career choice. He's flustered and guilt-ridden every time he's asked by well-meaning adults if he intends to become a conductor like his famous father. After one of his father's concerts and four such queries in one night, Jeremy is delighted and relieved to meet an adult who notices the book he carries everywhere and asks if he's interested in dinosaurs. As Jeremy responds enthusiastically, his plans for the future coalesce and he blurts out his decision to become a paleontologist. The guests are shocked but Jeremy's parents seem pleased. The clever twist at the end of the book is the revelation that Jeremy's sister is the child who eventually follows in her father's footsteps.

Adults don't appear too intelligent in this farcical send-up, but the horrible truth is that this *is* a standard and tempting question for adults to put to children. Martchenko's wacky characters are just right, especially the corpulent balding gent who snoozes through the concert and the overdressed fat lady. Brott's tale is lightweight, but certainly breezy and amusing and he does touch on something that concerns every child.

For the most part, these books with their insouciant, take-charge protagonists promote the concept of the child as arbiter of his or her own fate. Not only are the characters effective and enterprising but their willing acceptance of magical conditions reinforces the buoyant belief of children that wonderfully strange things not only can but will happen to them.

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PRIMITIVE FANTASY

The incredible Mungwort quest. Moe Price. Illus. Norman Eyolfson. McClelland & Stewart, 1990. 128 pp., \$9.95 paper. ISBN 0-7710-7154-X.

A good witch and a bad witch competing for power over the world, two children (of different sexes, to insure an identification object for the reader) and an odd companion on a quest that only humans can accomplish, playing against time just before Halloween/New Year's Eve/Beltane. [Check one]. This is *The incredible Mungwort quest*, predictable from the very first page, an unexciting outline for a primitive computer game.

The children in this novel are just instruments in a superficial quest who go obligingly wherever they are sent, move neatly from station to station [Insert disc 2], pursued by enemies and assisted by friends, until they reach the final destination, fight a quiet combat and are brought back safely by a magic ring. Not even the scientifically minded Danny gets any wiser, while Louise