devices from becoming cloying. First are some lovely turns of phrase (I'm especially partial to the "frog on a bench reading Plutarch"), though the same respect for meter is not always shown. Most winning, though, are characterizations informed (I am certain) by many hours of real-time cat and human observation. Francine is vain and urbane; her human correlate would buy a half-caf, easy-foam, extra-hot, almond latte every morning. Tom is the mug of a truck-stop joe. In the book they are beautifully rendered as an elegant seal-point and an orange barn-cat, respectively. Francine's pleading on Tom's behalf is entirely credible as a human characterization. At the same time, anyone who has been subject to feline entreaties/manipulations/imprecations will appreciate the kitty subtext.

Some years ago, ***Barry Tranquada*** *was an M.A. candidate in philosophy at McMaster University. He now tries to keep track of other people's money in Vancouver, BC.*

New Titles from Annick Press

Kate's Shoes. Erica Dornbusch. Annick, 2001. 32 pp. $17.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-671-3. ***The Grandmother Doll***. Alice L. Bartels. Illus. Dusan Petricic. Annick, 2001. 24 pp. $17.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-667-5. ***Bing Finds Chutney***. Andrea Wayne von Königslöw. Annick, 2001. 24 pp. $18.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-669-1. ***Night School***. Loris Lesynski. Annick, 2001. 32 pp. $18.95 cloth. ISBN 1-55037-585-7.

There are a few brief years between the time a child learns to talk and before the sombre rules of "reality" take increasing precedence. During this magic time, toddlers are encouraged to gallop and cavort in any and all directions, both in their physical and mental spaces. Annick Press seems to support the "fodder for the fantastic" approach to reading with the spring 2001 release of these four books for young children: *Kate's Shoes*, *The Grandmother Doll*, *Bing Finds Chutney*, and *Night School*.

Kate's Shoes is a great example of the world seen through the eyes of a dreamy child. The plot revolves around a lost pair of shoes that becomes the object of a frantic search by a harried mother and her young daughter Kate who, while being practical in her search, cannot help transforming her surroundings from the urbane into the deliciously unreal. For example, in the living room the floral wallpaper and chintz chair upholstery propel Kate into the lush landscape of an imaginary garden. And so the search winds not only through the house but across deserts, jungles, and oceans in a wonderful domestic "I-spy" adventure.

The success of *Kate's Shoes* can be found within the talent of writer/illustrator Erica Dornbusch. Dornbusch, whose work as an art director and an illustrator is to get her message across without a word. Without text, the brightly coloured and intriguingly intricate but clear drawings in *Kate's Shoes* effectively communicate a well-chosen message for children ages two to four — enjoy your daydreams because they are beautiful.

The heroine in *The Grandmother Doll* also has a good imagination, but there is no mistaking this Katy for a head-in-the-clouds kind of dreamer! She reminds me, to some degree, of the little girl who, when "she was good, was very, very good and

when she was bad she was horrid." Katy spends some time cooling her heels in her room — but there, her wonderful imagination takes over — or rather, her grandmother doll takes over! This grand old lady marches into Katy's life and sets her straight, all in a very clever and amusing manner. The doll informs Katy about the poor quality of her life as a neglected toy. "Not that I'm complaining," she says loudly, and proceeds to tell Katy, in no uncertain terms, what it's like to sleep sitting up, go without television, and so on. Katy sets about making a TV, a stove, and a bed out of cardboard boxes so that the grandmother doll will be more comfortable. Children aged four to seven will appreciate how someone their age can turn a bad day into an occasion for an imaginative play time.

The Grandmother Doll's illustrator, Dusan Petricic, uses pen drawings made vivid with orange, reds, and pinks to embody the wry and wonderful spirits of the grandmother doll and her human. Well-known for his art in more than twenty children's titles, Petricic covers Katy's sizzling good to bad and back alterations expertly. It should be noted that Annick published *The Grandmother Doll* in 1993, but has brought out this version with "revised text and vibrant new artwork."

In *Bing Finds Chutney*, a little pig named Bing is lonely because she has just moved and doesn't know anyone, so she invents pictures of friends, longingly painting all the animals (including an elephant) she hopes to meet. Imagine her delight when she opens the door at dinnertime to find on the stoop her new friend, an elephant named Chutney. Children ages two to four will like the simplicity of the story and the happy ending.

Author/illustrator Andrea Wayne von Königslöw was introduced to the public with the publication of *Toilet Tales*. *Bing Finds Chutney* is actually not the first book for this adorable pig and elephant duo; the first book, *Bing and Chutney*, was published in 1999. Following the success of this book, the 2001 title serves as an introduction into the Bing and Chutney adventures. The new work does not come across with the same impact as the first story, however. The latter is a truly memorable work about friendship, while the prequel feels much more contrived and awkward, Bing and Chutney being shorn of much of their spontaneity. The original tale of Bing and Chutney takes several interesting twists and turns, but by comparison the latest title is a story outline. The soup is not quite as tasty this time, and it seems that Bing and Chutney have been watered down so that their story can be more easily spread out over a commercial series.

For the fourth book in this review, Annick brings back one of their successful book creators, Loris Lesynski, with a poetic story for children ages four to seven. Warning: if readers have already read any of poet/author/illustrator Lesynski's earlier works, such as *Dirty Dog Boogie*, they might have already caught the Lesynski bug! It is my personal theory that Lesynski's trademark wacky rhymes, when read aloud, are probably instantly addictive (although not dangerously so). The opening pages read:

> 'Eddie... Eddie... Eddie... Eddie... Eddie... EDDIE, GO TO BED!!! I've told you ninety thousand times!' his frazzled mother said. But Eddie wasn't sleepy. Just like every other night, his brain was rock-and-rolling and his eyes were nickel-bright.

Lesynski's mother — in curlers, with sagging eyes and mouth agape in mid-yell — provides a humorous contrast for the on-the-go Eddie, his million arms moving a

mile a minute as he invents magical wonders at his desk. The tale continues in verse with pictures dripping in comic details. Eddie decides to go to night school where the real fun begins. However, gradually Eddie and his classmates discover that they might not want to tarry in the unhallowed halls of *Night School*. While it might be fun to experiment with snacks "from La La Max, the nightclub down the street," it soon becomes apparent that "Night School is fright school," and a tired Eddie and his friends want out!

Through her artwork Lesynski unveils a gift for comic subtlety, a pleasant enhancement to her quirky wit. We all at one time or another have suspected that one of our teachers is a witch. Lesynski expands on this thought with her drawings of Eddie's teacher. Lesynski certainly raises suspicions that the woman is a witch, but neither the reader or Eddie can be sure. Only mysterious parts — her talon-like fingernails and long black dress — are shown, but tantalizingly the whole teacher is never completely revealed. Another piece of genius is the illustration which prompts the reader to draw a comparison between Eddie and Pinocchio. One frame shows Eddie working on a project on animals with donkey-like ears tied round his head and his mouth open in a full heehaw laugh. Eddie thinks he is fooling the authoritarian adult world when initially he revels in his night-time escapades. The joke is on him, Lesynski winks at the reader. With this drawing, readers suspect that if Eddie doesn't change his ways, his adventure might turn out to have a dangerous downside. The magic spell of *Night School* will make a Lesynski fan out of any reader, and the already-converted have a pleasurable opportunity to see this book creator's talent develop.

---

lian goodall *loves reviewing children's books and regularly contributes to* ***Quill and Quire*** *and several Ontario newspapers. Her reviews can also be found at http://liangoodall.com.*

A Story That Must Be Told

Dead Reckoning. Julie Burtinshaw. Raincoast, 2000. 120 pp. $9.95 paper. ISBN 1-55192-342-4.

Julie Burtinshaw's *Dead Reckoning* provides a brief but stirring fictional recounting of the ill-fated last voyage of the *Valencia*, a steamship that went aground off Pacini Point, Vancouver Island, on 22 January 1906. Though rescue ships did arrive, the ferocity of the storm and the treacherous rocks off the point prevented assistance, with the result that only 38 of the 164 passengers originally on board survived. But this story is not primarily about the tragic ineptness of the rescue ships, though a brief epilogue does provide an account of the changes that this disaster evoked. Rather, it is the story of one particular survivor and the memory of a voyage that has haunted him all of his life.

The story begins when the narrator visits her great-grandfather, James Moffat, who announces that there is a story that finally must be told. The story he tells is of his part in the *Valencia* tragedy, but it is also a traditional "coming-of-age" tale in which a teenage boy must learn to accept adult responsibilities in a moment of crisis. This crisis begins on the second day when, as foretold by James's somewhat