“Snoepje and the Pizza Box” is the first in a
cat-centric series to be known as “The Adventures
to Yin & Yang,” who are two aging fel-
ilines sharing a cozy, loving Minnesota life with
Antoine and Sara, a childless couple who “met
and married later in life,” according to the
book’s first sentence.
Written by Susan Hermse Schaefer, illustrated
by Michael Bower Putman, and ably translated
into Dutch by Julliet van der Aa, “Snoepje and
the Pizza Box” is being published simulta-
neously in America and The Netherlands, and
the text is in both English and Dutch, an un-
usual and fetching arrangement, much like the
book itself, which is a charming, comfortable,
and straightforward account of how Yin and
Yang get their cat-mojo back with the arrival
of a cuddly female kitten named “Snoepje” -
pronounced “SNOOP-yuh” - which is the Dutch
diminutive for “sweetie.” Snoepje is named by
Antoine, who is a Dutch philosopher and a com-
parative newcomer to the wide, welcoming
world of cat-lovers. He makes up for lost time
by falling head-over-heels for the cats in his
quiet, studious life.
Most cat-owners (although who ever heard of
really “owning” a cat?) wish their cats could
talk, and Yin and Yang, as drawn by Michael
Bower Putman, seem perpetually on the verge of
voicing their cat thoughts. Indeed, in one
full-page drawing toward the end of the tale,
“the boys’” tongues form small hearts in their
mouths, as if indicating the sweetness of their
dispositions. Putman has achieved the double
stroke of making Yin and Yang almost human

Author Susan Hermse Schaefer has ostensibly
penned a tale of feline - and human — rejuve-
nation, but “Snoepje and the Pizza Box,” like
any worthy children’s book, goes beyond its
stated theme and enlarges on it, in this case to
considerations of human kindness, human cru-
elty, and the love and caring inherent in both
people and animals. It is also about following
your dream, as it is the search for the kitten of
Antoine and Sara’s dreams that lends the book
its dynamic tension.
Schaefer has wisely placed her story in sur-
roundings that are familiar to readers young
and old; the denouncement, for instance, takes
place in a pizza parlor, a setting that rings true
whether in Minnesota or Holland. Pizza has
become as universal as cat fancy.

“The Adventures of Yin and Yang: Snoepje and
the Pizza Box” is dedicated to both the cats
and Schaefer’s late husband, Martijn Anna
Antonius Hermse, the model for Antoine, who
would agree, Schaefer says in the dedication,
with Jean Cocteau’s pronouncement that “I
love cats because I enjoy my home; and little
by little, they become its visible soul.”
That soul is luminously visible in this warm,
touching book.

Bob Ingram is the author of the short story col-
lection “Sun Songs” and is the co-producer, co-
writer and narrator of the documentary film
“Boardwalk.” He has written for more than 20
publications in a career that spans almost fifty
years.