au nom de la justice. C'est ainsi que le détective intègre qu'est Edgar Allan vit dans la gêne et se trouve contraint de rédiger une lettre de supplication à sa logeuse désireuse d'augmenter les loyers, que Ben, ce gamin salué par la police comme un vrai flic, noue une amitié à la vie à la mort avec un chien rencontré par hasard à qui il a donné la moitié de son sandwich, que ce même chien, Colbert, devient par son intelligence et son flair un détective à part entière.

Le récit s'empreint d'une tonalité familière à la fois poétique et humoristique. Les éléments naturels et les objets s'humanisent tandis que les humains s'animalisent ou se chosifient: "suspendue dans un ciel piqué d'étoiles, la lune a ouvert son oeil clair sur la ville endormie" (9) alors que Ben observe Von Kastein "comme une souris étudierait un bout de fromage posé sur une trappe, en se demandant s'il y a un piège" et qu'une certaine phrase prononcée par le savant fait au jeune garçon "l'effet d'un boulet catapulté sur les remparts de la citadelle" (77). Le narrateur intervient dans une relation théoriquement impersonnelle: il y met son grain de sel pour attiser ou calmer l'esprit du lecteur. De même il sait grandir ou réduire les personnages à sa fantaisie. Doué du "sixième sens" du détective et de son "troisième oeil" (60-61), spécialisé "dans les arcanes les plus nébuleuses, les mystères les plus sombres, les énigmes les plus enchevêtrées" (17), Edgar Allan peut aussi se trouver ravalé au rang de ceux qui sont "bouchés jusqu'à l'os" (85). Quant à Thoutmôsis 1er, sous ses bandelettes, il "ressemble plus à un enfant en bas âge qui fait ses premiers pas, qu'à un monstre sanguinaire" (110).

Les illustrations se marient bien à un texte dont les québécismes s'avèrent peu nombreux et qu'on peut recommander à tous.

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HARNESSING THE POWER OF THE IMAGINATION AND STORY IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Teaching as story telling. Kieran Egan. Althouse Press, 1986. 122 pp., $5.95 paper. ISBN 0-920354-17-3; **Primary understanding**. Kieran Egan. Routledge, 1988. 287 pp. ISBN 0-415-90003-4.

Probably since the emergence of language, stories have been used both in traditional and non-traditional societies for indirect teaching. Drawing on this time-honed recipe, Egan proposes "an alternative approach to teaching": this book is about "how to use the power of the story form in order to teach any

Egan analyses the impoverished views of children's intellectual abilities underlying accepted learning theories: the belief that children learn from the concrete to the abstract, from the simple to the complex, from the known to the unknown, etc. These principles, derived from studies such as Piaget's on children's logical thinking, ignore the power of the imagination. When comprehending stories, children are complex, abstract, non-local thinkers grasping intricate journeys to far away places and abstract dichotomies such as good/evil and kindness/cruelty. They will make sense of any knowledge, not just concrete mundane facts about their families and communities, provided "it fits the abstract conceptual structures" already in place.

Egan also argues that the present "objectives-content-methods-evaluation" approach to lesson planning has tended "to reduce and deform education into a process of accumulating sequences of measurable knowledge and skills" resulting in the trivialization of curriculum content. Therefore to revitalize schooling and to transmit our cultural heritage, Egan views curriculum as ideally based on "good stories to be told rather than as sets of objectives to be attained".

The principles of Egan's proposed "Story Form Model" are clearly presented for teachers, along with examples of lessons and units from across the curriculum. Some may find certain steps in the lesson-outline daunting; however, I think the directives would still be successful if teachers followed their intuition and told captivating "stories of science, technology, language, history, life on earth, the stars and planets and so on"

Although strongly agreeing with the book's message, I found the writing to be irritatingly repetitive, and suspect that with editing it could be written in only half its present length.

Egan's model of planning teaching is refreshing but not entirely new: good teachers have always harnessed the power of story. If implemented and introduced to student teachers it could act as an antidote to the mechanization of learning and to such meaningless and contentless concepts as mastery learning of critical thinking skills. Story-telling and serious use of the imagination would once and for all be recognized as powerful tools of the intellect.

Although *Primary understanding* is a longer and more complex book than *Teaching as story telling,* all of the key arguments are repeated. Rather than discussing the elementary curriculum in general, Egan here focuses on Early Childhood, establishing an epistemological basis for a curriculum intimately "tied up with magic and ecstasy, with imagination and with the [ways of thinking] of oral cultures" (87).

To substantiate his claim that major similarities link the thinking of preliterate oral cultures and the intellectual style of young children, Egan musters arguments from several disciplines, most notably Anthropology. He claims that both groups live in worlds that are "predominantly contextualized and story-shaped" which "create, stimulate, and develop the imagination".

Once he has established a case for the primacy of the imagination in the thinking of young children, it follows that the Story Form Model is the ideal teaching method and The Great True Stories of the World the most appropriate content of an ideal Early Childhood curriculum.

Several new and interesting issues are raised. By highlighting the differences between the ways of thinking of oral and literate cultures, Egan gives some insights into some children's failure to become literate: "at about age seven children who are going to be successful in the educational system begin to go through a significant restructuring of thought" (127). This transition only takes place when children adopt a decontextualized style of thinking. Developing oracy to the full by encouraging young children's delight in rhyme, rhythm, and story is the best preparation for literacy.

As Egan says, some of his scholarly background material is unusual in educational publications but I strongly disagree when he apologizes for its inclusion. It is not the inclusion of scholarly material but the rambling style of writing which may discourage readers. I feel that with a tighter framework the central argument about the nature of early childhood thought would come through with much more impact.

These arguments about the nature of though spring from Egan's belief that a literate individual's development recapitulates four different ways of making sense of the world which were available to mankind at various stages of cultural evolution. In fact, this is but the first of a series in which he plans to outline the entire K-12 curriculum. When completed, this curriculum proceeding "from fantasy to the extreme limits of reality" will certainly help in the fight against the dehumanizing of education through mechanistic means-ends models. Meanwhile, unfortunately, "Builders of clockwork oranges continue to thrive in education" (257).

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KHALSA'S LAST BOOK

Julian. Dayal Kaur Khalsa. Illus. author. Tundra Books, 1989. Unpag., $17.95 cloth. ISBN 0-88776-237-9.

Julian, published posthumously, was the last completed work and the second last manuscript produced by Dayal Kaur Khalsa before her death last July. *Julian*, while even more beautiful than its predecessors (can that be possible?), is a slight departure from her earlier works.

Julian is a large boisterous yellow dog that the owner of the farm acquires