



Silver Talisman or Moral Compass: Empathetic Experiences and Sustainable Practices within Elizabeth Enright's *Thimble Summer*

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Abstract

Young children must arrive at an awareness of the appropriate universal concepts helping all to live in a way which will perpetuate and protect both the natural world and humanity itself. Such a lifestyle will be adopted and maintained primarily as empathy for others, and for nature herself, is developed within the character and psychological make-up of our youth. One method of assisting children in the development of such an overarching empathetic mindset is the sharing of children's literature carrying themes and character models which emphasize sustainable living practices, whether based in nature or relationships with others. Elizabeth Enright's Newbery award-winning title, *Thimble Summer*, is such a literary work. This Newbery-award winner speaks to healthy, sustainable living, as typified in healthy animals, as well as crops and life-affirming relationships, and the protagonist, Garnet Linden, remains an environmentally mindful, family-supportive role model for the 21st century child reader.

Keywords: Environmental Stewardship, Environmental Education, Empathy, Magical Realism, Morality, Nature, Sustainability, Nature-based Children's Literature.

Introduction

Sustainable living in the 21st century spans all aspects of living. In addition to how we care for and protect animals, natural ecosystems, flora and fauna, water, and the very air we breathe, this way-of-life also considers how we relate to others and resolve issues of social injustice: human poverty, illiteracy, and suffering due to natural, financial and societal imbalances. This definition is expansive because our young children must arrive at an awareness of the appropriate universal concepts helping all to live in a way which will perpetuate and protect both the natural world and humanity itself. Such a lifestyle will be adopted and maintained primarily as empathy for others, and for nature herself, is developed within the character and psychological make-up of our youth. One method of assisting children in the development of such an overarching empathetic mindset is the sharing of children's literature carrying themes and character models which emphasize sustainable living practices, whether based in nature or relationships with others. For, as Cott (1981) posits: "a child's favorite books are often consciously the models for, or the most important influence on, his or her later beliefs and ways of living" (p. 56). Proof positive is neuroscientist Paul Zak's (2015) findings: "Narratives that cause us to pay attention and also involve us emotionally are the stories that move us to action" (p. 7). And, confirmation from the legal/instructive realm informs: "sociality which is connected with teaching and learning

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is part of sustainability.” (Raatzsch, 2012, p. 374)

Elizabeth Enright's Newbery award-winning title, *Thimble Summer*, is such a literary work. Set in rural Wisconsin in the Depression, *Thimble Summer* “tells of a summer experienced by nine-year-old Garnet Linden, a time of drought and anxiety about the crops” (Stahl & Attebery, 2015, p. 247). Elizabeth Enright no doubt held the wherewithal to develop this story, as she spent the summer months on her uncle's farm in the valleys of Southern Wisconsin, “giving her the opportunity to write from the force of personal experience” (Stahl & Attebery, 2015, p. 247). One particular summer, Enright lived through a summer drought in which she and her family “toiled up and down the interminable rows of vegetables, pouring water out of coffee pots and double boilers and anything else we could borrow from the kitchen” (Stahl & Atteber, 2015, p. 247). Due to her frustration with the drought, a time when “the corn withered, and the leaves shriveled away from the cucumber vines,” (Stahl & Attebery, 2015, p. 247), Enright wrote *Thimble Summer* to correct that experience and to provide hope to ensuing generations.

As scholar Caroline Hunt (1994) states, Enright “described the Wisconsin countryside more compellingly than any other children's author has done...attaining an almost Edenic importance to later generations” (p. 16). Such setting helped Enright shape an empathetic personality, Garnet Linden, who remains an environmentally mindful, family-supportive role model for the 21st century child reader. No doubt, Enright's novel and its call for healthy, sustainable living, as typified in a return to natural balance, life-affirming relationships, and proactive behaviors, is “made fully credible for the reader by the depiction of Garnet's hopes and fears and by Enright's descriptions of the rich country landscape.” (Stahl & Attebery, 2015, p. 247)

By reason of the author's direct experience and careful observation, what Enright describes as “the blood and bone...that make book children real,” *Thimble Summer* opens with the protagonist, Garnet, witnessing firsthand both the joy and harshness of nature's offerings. Garnet points her fist to the sky as she witnesses the damage to her family's crops in a period of drought, declaring “You, why in time can't you let down a little rain?” (Enright, 1938 p. 4). She notices the glassy river between the trees getting lower and lower. She understands her father's constant worry as his lantern burns long into the night – how will he sustain his family without money from the crops? She first resorts to escapism and to pseudo-solutions. “I'd rather be up on an Alp...You know, one of those mountains they have in Europe. There's snow on top of them even on the hottest days of summer. I'd like to be sitting in the snow looking miles and miles down into the valley” (Enright, 1938, p. 5), also dipping her arms into the water trough in their basement, feeling the “coolness spreading through all her veins” (Enright, 1938, p. 9). Of course, here Garnet is exhibiting a well-known defense mechanism, denial. As psychologist Norgaard (2006) states, she is masking the pain associated with her dilemma, a harsh climate, “avoid(ing) thinking about it, whilst simultaneously shifting attention to positive self-representations, and...framing them in ways that minimize their potency.” (p. 384)

However, thankfully, to remedy this ineffective response, she goes back outdoors, changing the narrative. (Garnet, in fact, plays outside frequently, “a girl in motion throughout much of the book: we see her running, swimming, and doing handsprings” (Sweeney, 2007, p. 148). Garnet is forced to overcome her denial of “the effects of ecological degradation in our routine and everyday material existence” (Worthy, 2013, p.148). Further trying to alleviate the dry heat, Garnet and her brother, Jay, “go down a road, through a pasture, and across half a dozen sand bars before they came to a place deep enough to swim in” (Enright, 1938, p. 10), realizing the extent of both nature's and the family's present precarious situation. They explore the residue of the many sandy flats of the river bed, formed by the drought. Garnet and Jay serve as environmentally empathetic role models in this instance, as they do not ignore what is happening in nature, but instead go outdoors to become aware of

the problem, relating with the natural world despite the present harsh conditions. As Barton and Pretty (2010) relate, Garnet and Jay's example should be the norm, as "regular outdoor play brings immediate health benefits, and may instill healthy *behaviors* early in life." (p.3952)

Such character models, if adopted by child readers, will no doubt assist in the development of children, (and adults when such children are grown), who play in nature, finding its magic and its gifts. For, as Erickson noted, self-identity is correlated with *identification*. When children identify with characters, certain social attitudes are developed. Such attitudes might include a penchant for outdoor recreation (such as is modeled by Garnet and Jay). Certainly, studies show "those who play in nature identify themselves as lovers of nature, while those who do not play in nature do not identify themselves as such" (Broom, 2017, p. 40). In further support of this contention, Braun found "the amount of time spent in nature is a factor in promoting positive connections with nature." (Braun & Dierkes, 2017, p. 944)

As she and her brother explore, Garnet comes upon "a small object, half-buried in the sand, and glittering. She knelt down and dug it out with her finger. It was a silver thimble! How in the world had that ever found its way into the river? She dropped the old shoe, bits of polished glass, and a half dozen clamshells she had collected and ran breathlessly to show Jay. It's solid silver...and I think it must be magic, too!" Silver, a *natural* chemical element, symbolically represented as Ag, has served as a talisman for centuries, early incidences reaching far back into the Persian empire. In fact, a recorded oblong talisman from 1539 carries the image of Archangel Michael, who is charged with the giving of rain! (Sommerville, 1889, p. 14). Carrying this symbology and sympathetic imagery into the 20th and 21st centuries, perhaps part of the magic of Garnet's silver talisman, as she and Jay attempt to enjoy the outdoors, is her and her brother's recognition as to the value of rain, nourishment for the earth and all those who live upon it. Her "talismanic object" will, as pointed out by Martinez (2008) "capture the narratological focalization from the beginning of the story, and its entrance in the account will become the arke' or catalyzing force for the extraordinary actions and experiences of the characters" (p. 373). Such actions will involve the natural world, interactions with others, and moral choices, in Garnet's incidence.

Garnet's emphasis on the wonder of nature (spending time therein) will indeed, as discussed throughout this paper, lead her to not only physical treasure, but existential change and personal growth as well. For, as Otto (2017) notes in the journal *Global Environmental Change*, "connectedness to nature has a much stronger relationship to ecological behavior than environmental knowledge" (p. 92). In fact, Garnet's interaction with nature this particular night mimics Garrett Hardin's law of ecology: *We can never merely do one thing*. In other words, as explained by Heneghan (2018), "every change we impose has ramifications, though only rarely do we know the full extent of these changes." (p.237)

Garnet is already on her way to such a change in the next scene, on the way back home from the river. Of note, Jay still must "grow" into his every day truths, commenting as they walk: "I don't want to be a farmer and watch my good crops eaten with wheat rust or dried up with drought...I want to be out in it. On the sea. I'd like to be a sailor" (Enright, 1938, p. 12). Garnet pays no mind, once home watching the moths come to the window "banging softly against the screen, and climbing up and down it with quick, delicate legs. Tiny insects crawled through the screen's meshes and fluttered about the flames...." (Enright, 1938, p. 13)

Certainly, Garnet's belief in, and love of, nature pays off! She "wakes with a strange feeling that something is about to happen" (Enright, 1938, p. 14). That something is none other than a thunderstorm and an overnight rain! As the raindrops begin, Garnet whispers "Don't stop!" Wind stirs in the leaves and "the rain bursts strong and loud upon the world...She turns and runs down the little stairway to her father and mother's bedroom. 'It's raining! It's raining hard!' Garnet felt as though the thunderstorm were a present she was

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giving to them” (Enright, 1938, p. 14). Garnet also shares the gift of rain with her brother, Jay, running to his window and calling “Wake up, wake up! Come on out and get wet! Her brother’s astonished face appeared. ‘Oh, boy!’ he said and in less than a second was out of doors...grabbed Garnet by the hand and ran down the slope and through the vegetable garden. They slipped and slid, dodged bean poles and hurdled cabbages, and landed exhausted at the pasture fence.” (Enright, 1938, p. 15)

Both Garnet’s love for nature and her concern for the welfare of her family (especially her father) *manifests* into a rainstorm. Case in point: Garnet not only “gives” the rain to her family, but also ruminates over the animals, the “horses in the lower pastures, their heads raised and manes blowing” (Enright, 1938, p. 15) as well as the plants: “Garnet held her breath and listened very carefully, it almost seemed as if she could hear roots deep in the wet earth drinking and coming to life again” (Enright, 1938, p.16). This “magic,” at least in Garnet’s mind, materializes as a result of finding the thimble in the sand-bars. And, even though Jay was disgusted with nature during the drought, he welcomed playful gifts such as the ram’s head and turtle, also found in the sandbar. Staunch belief and concern for nature, no matter the present circumstance - rather calm or tempest - renders, in essence, the gift of life – the joy of survival.

Thus, we are beginning to note from this introductory chapter a sense of magical realism in Enright’s book, defined as, to quote Latham (2006), “the manifestation of the supernatural in everyday life” (n.p.). A comparative example is David Almond’s *Skellig*, in which the characters, Michael and Mina, care for a wounded angel found in their garage, resulting in the healing of Michael’s ill baby sister. In effect, characters in works of magical realism become “extraordinary beings” in and of themselves, effecting change, i.e. “magic,” as a result of acts of kindness rendered and/or heroism displayed within one’s everyday existence. The reader identifies with Garnet, a child who embraces “place,” pays attention to, relates with and enjoys her environs, no matter its present state of being, and strives, in whatever fashion, real and imagined, to improve nature’s ability to both sustain and thrive. Bigger and Webb’s (2010) theoretical contention is perfectly exemplified: “...fiction as a stimulus...focusing on questions of environmental quality, is one way of preparing young people to become champions of good...affirming that it is normal to stand up for good” (p. 408).

This good, then, will mitigate the effects of climate degradation, and serves as a perfect example of magical realism and the talismanic object, for in Enright’s telling “the quest at the center of the novel is itself both unbelievable and an oxymoron,” (balance and well-being in *nature*), and in Garnet’s character “the impossibility of success is undeniable and yet the protagonist has an optimistic belief to the contrary” (Inggs, 2011, p. 105). Enright has completed her goal of “correcting” her childhood situation (the drought she experienced) by means of her imagined narrative, the creation of an idyllic place – a talismanic novel which embeds an environmentally thematic “moral compass” within her readers’ psyche.

Incidences within the pages of *Thimble Summer* also depict the importance of a stable supply of water and food to one’s immediate and societal family. First, the great-grandmother to Garnet’s best friend is a storyteller par excellence, revealing the story of how, as a child, she worried and worried over purchasing a coral bracelet at the general store, all the while her family trying to complete chores associated with keeping the family fed. Walking to the store against her father’s wishes, she meets a stranger who gives her pause as he grabs her arm. “Please, let me go, I’m late for supper,” she tells him. But, the stranger wishes to talk more. “Supper, said the man. How would you like it if you didn’t have any supper to go to? How would you like it if you didn’t know where your next meal was coming from?” (Enright, 1938, p. 25). The man eventually allows the girl to run-on, but only after she gives him her hard-earned fifty cents. This grandmother’s story is a reminder: keep your eyes on your fellow man, rather than riches or personal excess. The story points the reader back to the present condition, the growing economic divide between classes, for it is

becoming common knowledge that “inequality has been rising in nearly all of the world’s rich and upper-middle-income democracies since at least the mid-1980s, and in many countries this trend began in the early 1970s.” (Solt, 2008, p. 48)

As Garnet listens to this great-grandmother’s story, she is also no doubt internalizing the consequences of such income inequality, i.e. poverty and thus a dearth of natural resource, which may lead to destructive behavioral patterns on the part of the impoverished. She is adding to her storehouse of common sense and everyday wisdom this unfortunate truth of cause-and-effect. She is building a foundation for environmental and societal understandings, such as is discerned within the findings of Bourguignon and the World Bank (2001): “An increase in the degree of relative poverty or income inequality in a country generally leads to a rise in criminality” (p.189). Garnet appreciates and values the wisdom gained from the story, wishing she, too, could spend time with a great-grandmother of her very own in order to garner additional life lessons.

Again, we return to the value of kindness in human relationships and the “magic” which Enright promotes will emanate there from. Garnet, when experiencing a similar “run-away-from-home” moment, following a squabble with Jay, also meets strangers along the highway. Alternatively, during her magical “thimble summer,” her concern for others, exemplified in the fact that she buys all of her family members presents, essentially exhausting all her hard-earned money as she explores a nearby town, concentrating not on self, but on others, fosters good karma. She meets strangers who: 1) provide her a ride and later buy her an ice-cream cone at the County Fair; and 2) gift her with a rooster, because “A farm isn’t a farm without a rooster to let you know when he feels the day coming” (Enright, 1938, p. 122). When Garnet acts in a manner which portrays her deep respect for, knowledge of, and care for the welfare of others, well-being and happiness abound and the material life, jewelry and other such nonsense, is set aside. As all such “goodness prevails” stories, “in the end moral virtues are rewarded with great good fortune that comes from some magical source. There is a feeling of satisfaction when virtue is finally rewarded” (Miller, 1998, p. 379). Such source is of course Garnet’s moral compass, as represented and symbolized by the silver talisman. As Brambilla and Leach (2014) say, “morality is central to...the quality of intergroup relations” (p.401). And, as these scholars continue “morality is a better indicator of being valuable to the group than is sociability or other characteristics of communion.” (p. 402)

Not only does a great-grandmother’s story point to sustainable living based in themes of morality, but also an experience associated with Garnet’s love for reading. She forgets to leave the library before closing one summer night, so immersed is she in the story of White Seal in *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi*, traveling the wide seas vicariously along with this ocean creature in search of a safe island. After reveling in “stories about children and wild animals and explorers,” Garnet realizes her “locked-in” plight and wishes to be “A safe, happy pig asleep in its own pen with its own family” (Enright, 1938, p. 75). Garnet is, of course, rescued by her family and members of the community. Yet, to depict the direct opposite of such a safe, life-sustaining environment, Enright introduces a character no one has ever rescued. As Garnet and her family work around the clock one summer night at the lime kiln in order to fashion bricks for a new barn, their dog, also considered a member of the family, growls his warning as a stranger walks from the woods into the confines of the overnight camp.

When thirteen-year-old Eric Swanstrom enters Garnet’s life, he has not eaten in two days, has no parents, and has hitchhiked across the country. As Eric tells his story to her father, Garnet tries “to imagine sleeping in a drainpipe with the rain making a noise on it, and the damp coming in at both ends. She wonders what it would be like to be alone in the world as he was, with no mother or father or brothers; no roof, no bed, no food half the time, no comfort when you were afraid, no scoldings when you were bad. It was hard to imagine” (Enright, 1938, p. 44). She notes Eric’s “nice face, but too thin. He was too thin all over: his collar bone stuck out like a coat hanger, and sharp wrists protruded from sleeves that were

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too short” (Enright, 1938, p. 47). Garnet’s parents respond in a fashion which teaches her and her brother, Jay, a remarkable lesson about empathy and caring. Not only do they care for close family members, but they also adopt Eric as their own, providing room and board and purpose and family to the proverbial “child who has none.”

These parents exemplify our collective charge as delivered by Ratan Das (2006) in his book *Poverty and Hunger: Causes and Consequences*: “The main duty of the world of nations is to feed the hungry, as food-security is the birth right of every man” (p. 1). As her mother feeds Eric griddlecakes upon the entire family’s arrival back home after a long night of work, Garnet ponders: “I have a nice mother. I have a nice family. It made her feel safe and warm to know that she belonged to them and they to her” (Enright, 1938, p. 49). Garnet has become less innocent at this point, finding herself in a world inclusive of trial and tribulation. Yet, her family, as one, finds a way to rise above the tragedy “revealing security and reason...and a good measure of happiness” (Attebery, p. 131), characterizing the empathetic family members found so often within the pages of Enright’s major stories. In fact, Enright’s characters display the social economy approach to sustainability described by Connely (2011): “Strong social economy initiatives...are focused on community-based actions that incorporate the principles of equity, redistribution, solidarity, mutuality and meeting social needs, rather than maximizing profit” (p. 312). The child reader is provided a model of living, specifically relational *practices*, which will benefit those within ALL social classes, of course reducing criminality and homelessness within whole societies. These moralistic relational practices in fact have brought, once again, transformative change, the magic of the silver talisman.

Since Garnet now understands the value of “a pig asleep in its own pen with its own family,” she can also direct empathy toward the family’s farm animals. Right away, she “adopts” one piglet, Timmy she names him, as her own, training and grooming him to show at the County Fair, talking to him tenderly (“at the Fair, there’ll be lots of other pens there with pigs in them, too,” she assures Timmy), scratching his stomach ever so often. On the day of the Fair, Garnet even feeds Timmy a strawberry ice-cream cone for all his trouble.

While awaiting the judges, Garnet and her friend, Citronella, giggle and ooh and ah as they note piglets with “pale pink ears and little turned-up snouts...a prize hog, black and thundery, and big as a grand piano...little calves with pink noses, and magnificent, dangerous-looking bulls” (Enright, 1938, p. 103). They gape at stallions “roan, and dapple-gray and black, *with* huge arched necks and dark fiery eyes, and a colt that was hard to leave, *with* a satiny coat and long unreliable legs he could fold up like jackknives” (Enright, 1938, p. 104). Garnet and Citronella, in this instance, are mirroring Cheng’s definition of “connectedness with nature” – the ability to enjoy nature, show empathy towards other living creatures, view one’s self as a part of the natural world, and as one responsible for taking care of nature (Cheng & Monroe, 2012, p. 35). They are in essence adopting the practice of treating the animals as their “kin.” Their being, their life activity, is intertwined with that of the farm animals. The characters, and thus their readers (as proved above), are, according to Antonio (2019), “remembering and re-creating the human-nature tapestry of relationship through cultural beliefs, language, and daily practices that help remind the human being that we are intimately and simultaneously dependent upon and responsible for the natural world.” (p. 23)

In fact, during this section of Enright’s tale, we are entering a traditional “pastoral,” narrative, and “the appeal of the pastoral remains conspicuous in both children’s stories and in environmental thought” (Heneghan, 2018, p. 40). In fact, pastoral scenes are “ideas rooted in ancient thought, providing a powerful goad for environmental action” (Heneghan, 2018, p. 39). Belying the name, pastoral accounts compel conflict, requiring “these human consolations: redemption and recovery” (Heneghan, 2018, p. 45). Thus, an antithetical “life-lesson” experience emerges in the narrative, the artificial thrill of the County Fair’s “unnatural” activities.

We see Garnet and Citronella ride the carousel and round-about, which makes Citronella sick for awhile. However, the girls still decide to climb into the chairs of the ferris wheel. While high atop the wheel on the third round, the lever malfunctions, and the girls are stuck, just long enough to miss the judge's visit to Timmy's pen. In Enright's world, with man-made technology comes grief and a missed special moment with the pig Garnet loves. Yet, once back amongst the pigs, cows, and horses, Garnet and Timmy are redeemed. They win the blue ribbon and prize money, and the family, including Eric, who they now cannot "get along without," celebrates, enjoying a supper together at a fairground counter. Enright teaches a lesson to the reader with this juxtaposition of the real necessities of life – the hens, the pigs, the cattle, the horses, the pastures, the rivers "wound like a path made out of looking glass," the corn, and the woods "deep and shadowy" - superimposed upon the "non-reality" of the rides, the "temporary world of the fair" (Enright, 1938, p. 119), and the "freak" shows. What truly matters, what truly must be considered, nurtured and respected to ensure survival and a happy life – is not technology or sensational thrills. It is nature and nurture (family). We return to Alston's contention: "Even in preparing children for instability, children's literature still dictates a certain way of living; it demonstrates that ideals exist, that readers should strive for a 'good' home and family" (Alston, p. 71). Garnet has returned to her natural state. She has been reminded "there can be a return, and all, then, will be well with the world." (Heneghan, 2018, p.40)

This lesson also illustrates the contentions of Thayer (1994), who labels America's fascination with technology as a "technological theme park" mindset (our ability to invent new gadgets and technologies far exceeds our ability to evaluate the impacts of these advances). This scholar posits "sustainable landscapes," defined as physical places where human communities, resource uses, and the carrying capacity of surrounding ecosystems can all be perpetually maintained, may serve as a solution to this dilemma of our present, seemingly universal "signed-in" psyche (pp. 46-67). Taylor (1995) even posits that landscapes can "strike back at those who seek to alter it, divide it, objectify it, or deny its inherent power" (p. 63), as is the case in our technology-centric world, and as was the case for Garnet when she took her eye off the "prize" of her pet pig and therefore many associated responsibilities. Yet, once she recovers from this diversion in thought and action, she returns to "a life of simplicity, outside in nature, under clement skies, quitting the 'rat race'" and her world once again returns "to the stuff of green dreams." (Heneghan, 2018, p. 42)

Certainly, sharing this book with a young reader will aid in assisting literacy experts and environmental educators as they strive to, targeting young impressionable minds, "confront societies and individuals with the fact that they can make a difference, and should do so by assuming responsibility for their choices" (van der Leeuw, 2014, p. 116). In fact, van der Leeuw (2014) believes part of an educators' role in sharing literature such as *Thimble Summer* is to train children in taking responsibility for choices, helping them to understand the concept of consequences and understand the cause-and-effect of differing actions (p. 117). Gonen (2011) even suggests environmental problems will be reduced over time if children are educated with the use of environmentally friendly story books. (p. 3633)

Part of the responsibility (of which van der Leeuw speaks) must be consistency in behavior and the maintenance of a hopeful attitude. The day after the excitement of the Fair, Garnett rubs her silver thimble "up and down, up and down, on the front of her Jersey till it had a good shine" (Enright, 1938, p. 121). Garnet overhears her brothers' (Jay and Eric) conversation in which they are considering a future in farming, but are concerned about the devastation of an earth out-of-balance. "I've seen rivers dried up and shrunk away to nothing, and the earth all full of cracks, and cattle dead for want of water...a wall of dust roll up from the prairie black as your hat and high as the sky," Eric says (Enright, 1938, p. 122). Yet, Garnet, once more, remains full of hope, a theme found throughout Enright's writing, for, as noted by Hunt (1990): "An optimistic frontier mentality persisted among Wisconsin families: an idea that something new and better could be forged..." (p. 19)

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As Enright's characters, Hunt (1990) continues, are characteristically "anything but passive" (p. 21), Garnet must respond as Eric relays his not-so-fond memories. "Look, Eric. I found this in the river on one of the mud flats that came up during the dry spell. It's solid silver and it's very valuable. You know why, Eric? Because it's magic, that's why." "Well, if it's a magic thimble, I'm much obliged to it for bringing me here," Eric counters. (Enright, 1938, p. 123)

No doubt, the silver thimble, which the reader now understands is Garnet's magic touch, her life-affirming manner of being with animals, plants, and people, works to Garnet's favor yet again, proving Attebery's (2009) contention: "Enright's characters are prepared to be lucky. When magic comes along, they are ready to accept and take advantage of it because all along they have been learning this kind of attentive resourcefulness" (p. 132). They are in fact ready to take action based in this attentiveness, as we have seen exemplified in Garnet's character. Happily, as Persson's (2011) study indicates, children who are "initially worried can gain hope for the future and become engaged in issues concerning the environment and sustainable development" (140) when they develop a mindset of "action competence."

An illustration of the fact the protagonist has reached the pinnacle of both a "connectedness with nature" and an acceptance of the "magic and luck" associated with action and a hopeful attitude, necessary to a healthy planet and society, is found as Enright ends *Thimble Summer*. As Garnet relishes the true happiness of the day, she "walks across the vegetable garden and across the pasture to the slough. A green light, tranquil and diffused, glowed among the willow saplings. The water was clear and motionless. Garnet leaned against a tree. She was so quiet that a great blue heron, fancying itself alone, flew down between the branches and paused at the water's edge. She watched the handsome creature, with his blue crest and slender long legs, wading and darting his bill into the water. She was so near that she could see the jewel color of his little eye. He stood for a contemplative moment on one foot, still as a bird of carven stone; and in that moment it seemed to Garnet that he had become her companion." (Enright, 1938, p. 124)

Conclusion

Garnet has connected with nature, to include people and place, in a positive, moralistic matter, to the point she is one with all life forms, essentially controlling natural occurrences. Caveat: Wohl and Enzle (2002), as well as other psychologists, have found that study participants who believe in luck and their end goal positively affect their chances (pp 1388-1397). Jumping cartwheels as the book ends, she portrays, with an enthusiastic form of physicality, her happiness with home and hearth. Her moral compass, fostered by a bit of sympathetic magic (the silver thimble), has led Garnet to the pinnacle of well-being, and, as a vicarious role model, her character points the child reader in the same direction. For, as Peter Hunt (1994) notes: "It is arguably impossible for a children's book (especially one being read by a child) not to be educational or influential in some way; it cannot help but reflect an ideology" (p. 3). And, as neuroscientists have confirmed: "...effective stories induce 'transportation' into the narrative. Transportation happens when one loses oneself in the flow of the story...This shows why stories affect behavior after the story has ended: we have put ourselves into the narrative" (Zak, 2015, p. 10). A journey into the pages of *Thimble Summer* no doubt carries the child reader into a state-of-mind which fosters sustainable living practices, both realistic and relational.

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