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"Children's Literature: A study on the writer Richmal Crompton and her character William Brown"

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to address children's literature with a focus on the figure of Richmal Crompton and her famous character William Brown, considered a quintessential anti-hero in this genre.

Firstly, the aim is to offer a Feminist Criticism as an approach to children's literature drawing an overview from the author to her female characters. In the second part of the essay, a close reading of Richmal Crompton's books will analyse the characteristics of William Brown and the world surrounding him. His fictional world is rich in nods to the reality of those years and frames the adventures of the character. An exploration on how this eternal eleven-year-old schoolboy perceives the society and the prevailing mentality of that period is also part of this study.

Finally, since Spain is one of the countries in which the book was more successful, the last section will be about the censorship during Franco's years with a focus on authority, sexuality and religion, to demonstrate how this genre became one of the targets of the dictatorship as it was read from a political point of view.

Keywords: R. Crompton, William Brown, Women's writing, 20th Century, Censorship

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Children's literature: A study on Richmal Crompton and her character William Brown

0. Introduction

The immense intellectual activity of the 18th century entails a turning point regarding the birth of the modern notion of infancy. The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a notable figure in this field and with the publication of his Emilie (1762) "Children are no longer seen as miniature adults, but organisms going through various stages of development" (Ozmon cited in A. Aparece 2005: 63). The framework to establish the idea that children need their own literature had obviously been introduced with didactic purposes.

The British historian J. H. Plumb considers John Newbery (1713-1767) the father of the children's book market. In 1745 J. Newbery opened the first bookstore for juveniles called "The Bible and Sun", which indicates a different target of people with leisure to buy, time to spare and money to spend (Plumb, 1982: 267).

The 19th Century could be defined as the Golden Age of Children's Literature. The height of fantasy can be placed in Romanticism and in the above-mentioned time the Grimm Brothers published in Germany and Lewis Carrol appears in England with his famous *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) among others.

In the beginning of the 20th Century the standpoint of the writers was different and they tackled topics such as freedom, fears, dreams or rebellion against adult's world. The last one is omnipresent throughout the saga of William Brown.

1. Richmal Crompton

Nowadays, few people remember Richmal Crompton. Nevertheless, her character William Brown has influenced personalities such as John Lennon, who admits, in a biography written by Philip Norman, that he was a big fan of the little boy. As a curiosity, in an extract from William and the Pop Singers, the writer seems to mock the band of the Beatles (Whyte, 2016):

> 'He´s educated. It was him that made us call ourselves the Argonauts,'
> 'It´s a foreign language', said Ted. 'Out
> of his education', said Johnny. 'He´s
> our leader', said Pete.
> 'The brain of us', said John…
>
> 'He´s had a classy education and taken classy exams, and sometimes it comes over him that he´s wastin´ his life singin´ pop songs…' (William and the Pop Singers cited in Whyte, 2016: 151).

The English author Mary Cadogan (1928-2014) was the person in charge of writing a notable biography of Richmal Crompton (1890-1969) in a book entitled *Richmal Crompton: The Woman behind William* (1986). The book explains how she was always in contact with children due to her profession as a teacher and later as a governess. Having suffered an attack of poliomyelitis she lost one of her legs, then she turned to write William's books, which made her famous worldwide. The books portrayed England society for the major part of the 20th Century, more concretely from 1919 to 1970.

2.Women's role in Crompton's texts

It is important to remark that R. Crompton has been associated with the English Suffragist movement of her years. It was a middle-class, white bourgeois movement, they stood on the classic notion of the woman, 'The Angel in the House', to campaign for votes for women. Parallel arguments were the ideas that women were both less violent than men and the social and imposed role of being the family educators. Owing to these roles they were expected to care for and educate society the same as their own children.

Generally speaking, this assumption is closely related with children's literature; being a female author was considered one of the sides of 'mother-educator' and through it, women could improve their subordinate social position.

On the other hand, the opposite case existed and the term 'Anonymous' was generally associated with women. Additionally, many women chose to sign their pieces under male pseudonyms. Mary Anne Evans (George Eliot) and Charlotte Brönte (Currer Bell) are well-known examples of these. This could be the origin of the popular belief that Richmal Crompton was a male author instead of a female one.

These doubts are also present among Crompton's characters using metafiction as a device to call attention upon the text and the author itself.

> 'Funny', said William to Ginger, 'here´s two books the same about some ole man called Richmal Crompton.'
> The Outlaws were languishing in the Spartan confines of the school library, held captive in detention by the English master's set task. An hour passed. Both books emerged begrimed and fingerprinted.
> 'Odd name for a girl,' said Ginger briefly. (Spence, 1987: 26)

As Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubart have pointed out in *The Madwoman in the Attick* "the dominant patriarchal ideology presents artistic creativity as a fundamentally male quality… Since creativity is defined as male, it follows that the dominant literary images of femininity are male fantasies too. Women are denied the right to create their own images of femaleness, and instead must seek to conform to the patriarchal standards imposed on them. Gilbert and Gubart clearly demonstrate how in the nineteenth century the 'eternal feminine' was assumed to be a vision of angelic beauty and sweetness, the ideal woman is seen as a passive, docile and above all selfless creature". (Moi, 1985: 57)

This sentence would explain the absence of a female character who questions the patriarchal authority in the complete works of our female writer.

A striking exception about the 'female issue' appears in *Sweet William* (1936), William is dissuaded against imitating the suffragettes by a woman who was herself a member of the movement. "I'm very much afraid it's no use", she says,

> I marched to London and made speeches at street corners and shouted `Votes for Women' all over the place, and – well, we'd never have got it if hadn't been for the war. It was the war that made them give it to us, not anything we did. (Sweet William cited in Whyte, 2016: 148).

In the essay called *Just William? Richmal Crompton and Conservative Fiction*, the writer William Whyte states that "Crompton had a particular reason for stressing this point. The depressed former suffragette, forced to conclude that the struggle had been `all rather futile´, this attitude is, indeed, one of Crompton's stock figures: providing further evidence that even the most high-minded and well-justified of campaigns will fail to achieve its goals." (Whyte, 2016: 148).

Focusing on the gender representation within the William Brown books, no subversive character appears properly, and all of them perpetuate the feminine prototypical models imposed by the binary thinking proceeding from modernity. For instance, the mother, Mrs Brown, who is the prototypical rural bourgeois lady, follows the models of passivity and

submission socially and ideologically imposed on women. She is the only one who has faith in reforming William. Her world consist of social acts like charitable meetings or tea parties. Completely happy with her situation, she never reconsiders her lifestyle.

William "dislikes little girls, not only because he considers them to belong to an inferior order but also because he suspects them of being allies of the civilization that threatens his liberty" (Greenway, 2002: 105). His attitude towards them is completely indifferent, except for Joan and Violet Elizabeth.

Joan is calm and helpful and Violet Elizabeth is the opposite. Joan has two sides, blonde and blue-eyed, like an angel but with a powerful will. She is feared and respected by William and his friends because she always achieves what she intends to. Violet Elizabeth could be analysed following the thesis of S. Gilbert and S. Gubar, they argue that "behind the angel lurks the monster: the obverse of the male idealization of women is the male fear of femininity. The monster woman is the woman who refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative –in short, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her". (Moi, 1985: 57).

3.The phenomenon of William Brown

The complete series of William Brown stories comprises has thirty-eight official volumes (including independent episodes) written between 1919 and 1970, the last one appearing posthumously a year after Crompton's death. Firstly they were published as short stories in *The Lady Home Magazine*, targeting the adult readers of the houses. Nevertheless, children were eagerly expecting each new story. The first book appeared on the market in 1922, catering for young readers.

What demonstrates the adult audience in the mind of the writer is the narrative of Crompton, with literary strategies such as the predominance of irony to make a social criticism, the background knowledge required: "politicians who give talks on Proportional Representation (William in trouble), women who admire Fauvism (Williams Treasure Trove), and country squires (William and the Masked Ranger)" (Whyte, 2016: 144). There are also examples with non-fictional characters like Pavlova:

> 'You've seen Pavlova, haven´t you?'
> 'Dunno.'
> 'You must know.'
> 'I mustn´t, said William irritably. 'I might have seen him and not known it was him, mightn't I?'(Just-William, 2010: 246).

The best way to gain a mental-image of William, is by reading the description that follows:

> William, his suit covered with dust, his tie under one ear, his face begrimed and his knees cut, looked at her in righteous indignation (Just William, 2010: 132).

He is an eternally eleven-year old schoolboy, who is always with his gang friends the 'Outlaws' as they have nicknamed themselves. It includes William as the leader, Ginger, Douglas and Henry. The term Outlaw comes from the popular legends of Richard I the Lionheart and Robin Hood, present in children's songs and lullabies. They were outcast people who lived in forests away from cities, taking from the rich and helping the needy, they had a romantic, carefree lifestyle with their own code. Likewise our 'Outlaws' are funny, unpredictable and daring, in summary rebels.

Although the author made him eleven forever, the time goes by and this time passing can be seen in his different and countless adventures. The titles of the books make us witness of the historical context: *William the Dictator*, *William the A. R. P.*, *William and the Moon Rocket* or *William´s television show*.

Talking about the setting of these adventures, it is a small unidentified village with all the stereotypes that define English idiosyncrasy: the complicated English currency system: pennies, shillings, half-crowns "One letter had a PS: ´I would be grateful if you would give *half a crown*

to my little brother William when next you meet him. I am *penniless* and he is such a nice good boy." (Still William, 2014: 396). Typical food like kidney pies, steak, lemon cheese, or Gooseberry Eyes sweets: "And William gave him a whole steak and *kidney pie*,' murmured Mrs Brown. 'Cook will have to make another for tomorrow' (Just William, 2010: 237), and last but not least, traditions like teatime… 'We're going to Mrs Brown's to *tea*, you know, Henri,' she reminded him. 'A 'right,' said Henri. (Still William, 2014: 65).

As children wanting to imitate the snobbishness of their parents, the group had their own liquor, which they called 'liquorice water'. "It was a half-holiday and William was in his bedroom making careful preparations for the afternoon. On the mantel-piece stood in readiness half a cake (the result of a successful raid on the larder) and a bottle of *'liquor'* water. This beverage was made by shaking up a piece of liquorice in water. It was much patronised by the band of Outlaws to which William belonged and which met secretly every half-holiday in a disused barn about a quarter of a mile from William's house." (Just William, 2010: 150).

Not only these everyday details depict the typical late Victorian or Edwardian English way of living in the countryside, but also fill the readers with the activities of neighbours, religious customs, and parishioner duties and so on.

> The Sunday School bell pealed forth its summons, but no one left the show. The vicar was depressed that evening. The attendance at Sunday School had been the worst on record. (Just William, 2010: 111).

This careless attitude towards school is a common denominator through the entire collection, whether in class or not.

> "I don't know much hist'ry. Ginger 'n' me've got a game we play in hist'ry class with rulers an' a rubber an' it doesn't leave us much time for listenin'."
> […]
> "I keep tryin' to explain to them about that," said William. "What's the good of us usin' up all our brains at school so's we'll have none left when we're grown up an' have to earn our livings? I'd rather keep mine fresh by not usin' it till I'm grown up an' need it. I think that's why grown-ups are so stupid,'cause they've used up all their brains over Latin an' hist'ry an' suchlike when they were at school, an' haven't got any left. I'm jolly well not goin' to use mine up like that, I can tell you. I bet I'll be cleverer than anyone when I'm grown up jus' 'cause I won't have used up all my brains over lessons same as some people do." (William the Detective, 1987: 43).

Even though the reader never gets to know what the specific village of the Brown's family is or for instance what is his father's job, it is possible to decode, thanks to the descriptions, that the family belongs to the middle class.

> William came in gratefully. It was a large, warm, clean kitchen. A small kitchen- maid was peeling potatoes at a sink, and a housemaid in black, with a frilled cap and apron, was powdering her nose before a glass on the wall. They both turned to stare at William. (Just William, 2010: 63).

> A thin, lugubrious face appeared over the fence that separated William's garden from the next door garden. (Still William, 2014: 56).

As can be seen in the preceding quotes the family has enough purchasing power to afford a cook and a maid and also a typical English house with a garden.
Although the family is middle class, the books are always criticizing and satirizing this group.

> You know, I'm *frightfully* interested in social work," went on her charming guest, "especially among children. I *adore* children! Sweet little dear of yours! And I *always* get on with them. Of course, I get on with most people. My personality, you know!

> You've heard perhaps that I've taken over the Band of Hope here, and I'm turning it into *such* a success…Well, now, it's here I want you to help me. You will, dear, won't you? You and your little mannikin. I want to get a different class of children to join the Band of Hope. Such a sweet name, isn't it? It would do the village children such a lot of good to meet with children of *our* class.
> Mrs. Brown was flattered. After all, Mrs. de Vere Carter was one of *the* Randalls.
> "For instance," went on the flute-like tones, "when I came in and saw your little treasure sitting there so sweetly,"… "I thought to myself, 'Oh, I *must* get him to come.' It's the refining influence of children in *our* class that the village children need. (Just William, 2010: 137).

National festivities shape the background of the stories and provide the boys with ideas for new adventures. The national celebration on the fifth of November called 'Guy Fawkes' appears as well as some other events such as the Cato Street Conspiracy in which an assassination attempt was made on the Prime Minister of the time, along with all the cabinet ministers. For instance, the execution of Mary Queen of Scots is also mentioned.

> "What I think is", said William, "that it's silly jus' havin' Guy Fawkes' day in November, an' then nothin' else all rest of the year. Lots of other excitin' things much have happened in hist'ry that we oughter do something about same as Guy Fawkes."
> "What else has happened?" demanded Douglas.
> Well, there mus' be somethin', said William, an' we've gotter find out what it is. There must be other people in hist'ry sides Guy Fawkes or they couldn't go on givin' lessons about it every week same as they do.
> He turned to Henry, who was generally regarded as the best informed of the Outlwas. "What else did happen in hist'ry?"
> "They were always killin' people for one thing," said Henry. […]
> "Well, we can't kill people," said William decisively. "We've gotter find something same as Guy Fawkes, but that'll do for this month." (William the Detective, 1987: 44).

The reader can glimpse a political satire that emerges from that character, instead of having the Beveridge Report (a document to ensure the basis of Welfare in UK in 1942) William and his friends have the "Outlaws' Report" in the book *William and the Brain Trust* (Whyte, 2016: 147). William has got something for everybody: he makes fun of both fascist stances such as Mosley´s British Union of Fascists and the utopian social reforms like Communism. On the one hand, he founds his own group wearing 'Greenshirts' instead of Blackshirts.

> You've gotter have a dictator…you've all gotter to be Green shirts same as us…We're goin' to fight everyone that isn't…We're goin' to fight everyone in the world…We're going to conquer the world…We're goin' to be dictators over the world. (William the Conqueror cited in Turner, 2016).

On the other hand, the Outlaws form a Junior Branch of The Society of Reformed Bolsheviks stealing all from the members of their old brothers communist organization and making William´s older brother leave Communism (Whyte 2016: 147).

> It´s all right when you get your share of other people´s things, but when other people try to get your things, then that´s different. Ah! Observes his father. That´s the weak spot. I´m glad you found it out. (William and the fourth cited in Whyte 2016: 147)

The mockery is everywhere and for everyone independently of the party line:

> There's four sorts of people tryin' to get to be rulers. They all want to make things better, but they want to make 'em better in different ways. There's Conservatives an' they

> want to make things better by keepin' 'em jus' like what they are now. An' there's Lib'rals an' they want to make things better by alterin' them jus' a bit, but not so's anyone'd notice, an' there's Socialists, an' they want to make things better by takin' everyone's money off 'em, an' there's Communists an' they want to make things better by killin' everyone but themselves. (William the Conqueror cited in Turner, 2016).

He accesses the real world through newspapers, radio bulletins, encyclopaedia and what he hears from the adults. Whatever he learns becomes real for him, be it a film or the plot of a book. As he is a highly imaginative child, he tries to carry out what he has learnt and this is the starting point for all his adventures.

> 'We've got an encyclopaedia at home' said Henry. 'A
> what?' said William.
> Henry wondered whether to attempt the word again and finally decided not to.
> 'A sort of book that tells you what things mean.'
> 'Oh, a diction'ry. Why couln'd you say it in English. You're always swanking with that bit of German your aunt thaught you. All right. You find out what it was an' tell us after tea. (William the Detective, 1987: 17).

International events of huge magnitude such as World War II are also present. The evacuees in the II World, or even the phenomenon of television that William and the Outlaws bring to the world of fiction as if it only were a children's game. William and the Nasties appears in the 1935 collection William the Detective. In this story William and his gang takes in the Jewish owner of the local sweet-shop, these rings a bell: terrorizing Jews in the same way as the Nazis. Indeed, Nasties is a mishearing of the word Nazis (Simons, 2006).

> 'They chase out Jews', volunteered Henry. 'Why?'
> 'Cause Jews are rich, explained Henry, so they chase´em out and take all the stuff they leave behind.'
> 'It is a jolly good idea.'
> 'Yes' agreed William, 'but we couldn´t do that even if we started bein' nasties
> `cause there aren´t any Jews here.'
> 'Ole Mr Issaacs is a Jew', volunteered Ginger. (William the Detective 1935: 116- 117).

It all starts when William and his friends set to evict Mr. Isaacs from the sweet-shop and as they think he is a dishonest merchant: one of the guys explains to the rest what the Nazi- 'Nasties' according to this boy- are doing in Germany:

> Yes, he's a Jew all right… an' if we were in Germany an' were nasties we could chase him out an' take everything in his shop. You're allowed to by lor *(sic)* in Germany – chase 'em out an' take everything in their shops. If you're nasties, I mean. (William the Detective cited in Simons 2006).

In his research about William and the Jews, Rabbi Dr. Chaim Simons explains that in the real world Hitler lost no time in introducing his anti-Jewish measures. Jewish shopkeepers were one of the first to feel Hitler's policies. On 1 April 1933, the Nazis organised a country-wide boycott of Jewish shops.

Moreover Henry states "They've got people called storm troops an' when these Jews don't run away they knock 'em about till they do." (William the Detective cited in Simons 2006). "On 1 April 1933, the day of the boycott of Jewish shops, young storm-troopers with swastikas on their sleeves stood outside Jewish shops holding enormous placards in both German and English reading '"Germans defend yourselves against Jewish atrocity propaganda buy only at German shops!" (Simons, 2006).

The criticism can be seen firstly, when following the German idea of 'Lebensraum' William tries to 'conquer' his neighbour´s garden (Fernandez, 2000: 31). Secondly, in the name

that William chooses for himself, Him Hitler as Her Hitler sounds like a name for a woman.

> Her *(sic)* Hitler with disgust – it sounded like a woman's name!
> "We're the nasties an' I'm Him Hitler an' we're goin' to take all your stuff so you'll jolly well have to clear out." (William the Dictator cited in Simons, 2006).

Another important event appears in his adventures with the publishing of the books *William and the A. R. P*. in 1939 and with *William and the Evacuees* in 1940' where William decides to plan an evacuation of the children of the 'cottages' to escape from the air raids (Greenway, 2002: 107).

In the real world, on September the first 1939 the British Government organised Operation Pied Piper with the aim of protecting civilians from bombing by relocating them in safer places. More than three million people were evacuated.

The boom of the psychology and psychiatric movement of the 60's also become a pastime for William, who explores "the 'sekkitrist' profession trying to cure mental troubles by writing down in a notebook everything the patient says" (Greenway, 2002: 102)

We can read these books in the light of the historical context as in the afore-mentioned examples but the reader can also presume that the author could foresee the space race of USA and Russia that took place in the 60's: 'William and the Moon Rocket' published in the late 50's. This time William and his friends try to build a spaceship (in a short time) to send it to the moon.

To conclude, we see the 20th century through the eyes of a child. This point of view has been praised by Fernando Savater in an essay dedicated to the figure of William Brown called "La infancia recuperada" or Javier Marias among others.

4.The censorship under Franco's leadership

Children's literature is a powerful tool to indoctrinate young minds as they have lower critical capacity. To focus on the topic of the censorship this article has as staple thesis the study of Ian S. Craig called 'Children's classics translated from English under Franco: the censorship of the William books and the Adventures of Tom Sawyer'.

Before going into this issue in depth, we should define the concept of childhood in Franco´s dictatorship (1939-1975). Obedience and respecting adults was unquestionable. As a proof of this we can quote the following text (from a school textbook):

> El que obedece se goza en dar gusto al superior, y esta satisfacción de complacer a otro es un modo de quererle de amarle. Es más fácil obedecer que mandar. El que obedece, no se equivoca: el que manda, puede equivocarse. Quien da una orden tiene que pensar si es posible su cumplimiento; en cambio, está libre de tal preocupación el que obedece. Un pueblo en donde todo el mundo cumple con su deber es un pueblo ideal. ¿Cómo se cumple con el deber? Acatando las órdenes de los superiores y llevándolas a la práctica. (Craig, 2000: 1)

As the William stories were very popular in Spain in the 50´s and 60´s, as any other book they suffered the strict control of the censors, like any other book: they used their 'scissors' to cut out any bit that remotely had to do with challenging authority, sex or religion: the following are just some eye-catching examples.

Concerning authority, this was a tricky issue in the world of William and the Outlaws, this explains why here extracts not only vanished but were also replaced by new phrases that reinforced the figure of adults. "Old Stinks the Science Master rather liked William" (Still William, cited in Pascua, 2011: 105) in the Spanish version appears as "Al professor de ciencias le era bastante simpático Guillermo". In the lines "He wrote lines in most of his spare time and made a thorough and systematic study" the words added in the Spanish version were "Escribía lineas durante la mayor parte de sus ratos de ocio para satisfacer las exigencies de su profesor". (Pascua, 2011: 105)

Regarding sexuality, in 'Just William', the scene of the main character kissing a girl

disappears for being considered a taboo behaviour according to Franco´s parameters.

> -That´s it [Jazz]. I´ll teach you at home. We´ll dance it to a gramophone. William walked on silence.
> She stopped suddenly under a tree and help up her little vivacious, piquant face to him.
> -You can kiss me if you like- she said. William looked at her dispassionately.
> -I don´t want to, thanks- he said politely.
> -Oh, you are a funny boy!- she said with a ripple of laughter, - and you look so rough and untidy. You´re rather like Jumble (his dog). Do you like Jumble?
> -Yes- said William. His voice had a sudden quaver in it. His ownership of Jumble was a thing of the past.
> -You can have it for always and always- she said suddenly. –Now, kiss me!-.bHe kissed her check awkwardly with the air of one determined to do his duty, but with a great, glad relief at his heart. (Pascua, 2011: 113).

Fifteen lines were eliminated, being the result of the same incident:

> -Esto es Jazz. The enseñaré en casa. Lo bailamos al son del gramófono-.
> Guillermo caminó en silencio.
> -Me encantaría verte bailar- rió Ninette, al poco rato.
> -Estarías la mar de raro! (Pascua, 2011: 114).

As regards to religion, although William is a Protestant, the Catholic censors eliminated several 'inappropriate' attitudes towards priests and saints. Additionally, the censorship apparatus eliminated any trace of Protestantism so that Spanish children could not have any contact with this branch of Christianity (Craig 1997: 183-193).

> Miss Lomas, with a good deal of confusion, launched into a not very clear account of the institution of Saint Valentine´s Day.
> -Well, I don´t think much of him's a saint,- was William´s verdict, as he took out another nut and absentmindedly cracked it, -writin' soppy letters to girls instead of getting' martyred prop'ly like Peter an' the others-.
> Miss Lomas put her hand to her head. (Still William cited in Pascua, 2011; 99).

The reader can see the difference in the translated version:

> La señorita Lomas, algo confusa, se puso a explicar con bastante poca claridad la institución del día de San Valentín.
> -¿Y escribía cartas de amor a las muchachas?
> La señorita Lomas se llevó la mano a la cabeza. (Pascua, 2011: 99)

5.Conclusion

"The anarchic, scruffy schoolboy has blundered into a political correctness battlefield" reads the article *Campaigners try to Outlaw William* published in *The Guardian*. Indeed, William's adventures are not seen through the same eyes as they were when the books were published for the first time. Nowadays he faces a trial as he has been accused of animal abuse, when he turns a dog blue, bullying and other unacceptable behaviours. Controversy has been raised on this topic and no longer is William one of the favourites for young reader.

> 'It says here this old Richmal "flirted with fascism", "projected her anima" and "had a mild hair fetish".
> 'Yes,' said William. (Spence, 1987: 26)

His hobbies include hunting which is not well-accepted in the current years for a child. "Farmer Jenks was the Outlaws' most implacable foe. […] William could not resist haunting Farmer Jenks' lands because the chase that always ensued was so much more exciting than an ordinary

chase." (Still William cited in Greenway, 2002: 101). Mockery of vegetarians is another of the instances that would be unacceptable in some contexts nowadays. "She doesn't'" said Ginger. "She only eats vegetables." "Well, how does she know that cabbages and suchlike haven't got feeling? Just 'cause they haven't got feathers an' don't sing an' carry on like birds no one takes any notice of them".

Nowadays few educators and parents would recommend William to their children. From today's point of view, political correctness is non-existent. However, having gone through the stories of this group of children headed by William, it could be seen that no mischief is intended, they are not bad boys, it is mainly their powerful imagination that gets them in trouble, taking out of their surrounding reality what they need to solve their daily problems. And it is not that they make these things out of the blue, they have seen an example of certain behaviours or -misbehaviours- in adults. Neo-nazi, bully, animal abuser, are some of the names William has been called over the years. Perhaps they are excessive if we bear the image of an eternally eleven-year-old schoolboy in mind. To conclude, the editorial director Gaby Morgan highlights a quote published in the Guardian that perfectly sums up the mood of this childhood gang of friends:

> What'll we do this morning? said Ginger. It was sunny. It was holiday time. They had each other and a dog. Boyhood could wish for no more. The whole world lay before them. 'Let´s go to trespassin' said William the lawless. (Still William cited in Flood, 2015)

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