

**Girls in Britches: Gender and Cross-Dressing  
in *Bloody Jack* and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle***

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Abstract:

This paper explores female-to-male cross-dressing narratives of two books for young people, *Bloody Jack: Being an Account of the Curious Adventure of Mary “Jacky” Faber, Ship’s Boy* by L. A. Meyer and *The True Confessions of Charlotte Doyle* by Avi. The nuances of cross-dressing and gender performance in these texts are examined against Victoria Flanagan’s structural and theoretical model of female-to-male cross-dressing as liberating for female protagonists. (2002) In light of claims that potentially liberating messages are central to female-to-male cross dressing narratives in children’s literature, analytic unpacking of complex messages about gender categories, roles, and the permeability or impermeability of boundaries between gender categories is necessary to tease apart liberations from restrictions. This paper scrutinizes the way protagonists’ agency is both enhanced and restricted by cross-dressing. Both heroines are ultimately shown as more liberated for having challenged gender norms through cross-dressing, but they are not liberated from other norms implicit in typical gender roles, such as heterosexuality. Protagonists’ cross-dressing experiences ultimately do not instigate radical categorical crises that would move these characters beyond constructions of gender.

Work Cited:

Flanagan, Victoria. “Reframing Masculinity: Female-to-Male Cross-Dressing.” In *Ways of Being Male: Representing Masculinities in Children’s Literature and Film*. New York: Routledge, 2002.

