



# Shakespeare's Boys: A Cultural History (Palgrave Shakespeare Studies)

*Katie Knowles*

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*Shakespeare's Boys: A Cultural History* is the first extensive exploration of boyhood in Shakespeare's plays. It examines a range of characters from Shakespeare's comedies, histories and tragedies in their original early modern contexts and surveys their performance histories on stage and screen from the Restoration until the present day. Focusing on the status of aristocratic boys, the transition from boyhood to manhood and methods of education, it argues that the varied and complex portrayal of boys in Shakespeare reflects the ambiguous and transitional status of boyhood in early modern England, and that the portrayal of these on-stage boys has been a crucial, and sometimes defining, factor in the performance history of Shakespeare's plays. This study embraces this idea of characters in flux, reading Shakespearean boyhood as a continuum in which each historical reincarnation depends upon and reacts against what came before, while influencing what is to come.

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