The parallels between the world of Much Ado About Nothing and the world of Castiglione's Book of the Courtier, the book that virtually launched the culture of civility that swept Renaissance Europe, are striking. Both set a premium on the arts of self-presentation; both emphasize the importance of theatricality in social interaction. However, what is also of crucial importance is to monitor emotions. In the key scene of the play, the Church Scene, a range of characters are engaged in reading the outward appearance of Hero, the slandered heroine, for signs of shame and inward remorse. I argue that the courtiers in the play seem to have misread Castiglione. Castiglione's concept of courtesy draws on Ciceronian ideas of decorum, which are based on Aristotle's definition of emotions as cognitive behaviour. This implied that emotions were amenable to a regime of habituation - a notion that Bourdieu was to adopt in his own definition of habitus. For Castiglione, as for Aristotle and Cicero, social performance did not merely reflect one's feelings: it was decisive in shaping one's emotions.

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