

The Australian Centre, The ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions (Europe 1100-1800) and The University of Melbourne present:

SHAME AND HONOUR IN MESSINA: *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING* AND THE CULTURE OF COURTESY

Thurs 21st November 2013 4.30pm

Free - no bookings required

Room 106, John Medley Building
The University of Melbourne, Parkville
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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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PROFESSOR INDIRA GHOSE is Professor of English Literature at the University of Fribourg in Switzerland. She is a Partner Investigator in the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions. Her book *Shakespeare*

and Laughter appeared with Manchester University Press in 2008. She is currently working on a project on Renaissance courtesy literature and the theatre.



Image from *The Heroines of Shakespeare*: comprising the principal female characters in the plays of the great poet. Engraved under the direction of Mr. Charles Heath, from drawings by eminent artists. New York [etc.] J. Wiley, 1849.