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STOICISM AS PERFORMANCE IN *MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING*

Acting Indifferently

Donovan Sherman
Seton Hall University, New Jersey



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ABSTRACT: This Element demonstrates how Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* models an understanding of the philosophy of Stoicism as performance, rather than as intellectual doctrine. To do this, it explores how, despite many early modern cultural institutions' suppression of Stoicism's theatrical capacity, a performative understanding lived on in one of the most influential texts of the era, Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of the Courtier*, and that this performativity was itself inherited from one of Castiglione's sources, Cicero's *De Oratore*. Donovan Sherman concludes with a sustained reading of *Much Ado* to demonstrate how the play, in performance, itself acts as a Stoic exercise.

KEYWORDS: Stoicism, performance, Shakespeare, Renaissance studies, theatre

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