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Reluctant Idols: The Language of Protestant Rebuke in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*

This short essay examines the ways in which Shakespeare directly addresses the representational modes that opened the theater up to Protestant critiques. Responding to anti-theatrical pamphlets that associated Catholicism's supposed superficiality with the falseness of playacting, I argue that *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* draws crucial distinctions between the lifeless portrait, the false player, and the lively body of the actor. Moreover, through its implicit references to clashes between theater companies and their critics, the play thus provides modern readers with an insight into the perceived danger, and power, of dramatic performance in Reformation England.