

Art and Artists in the *Novelas ejemplares*

Cervantes includes numerous references to both art and artists in his *Novelas ejemplares*. The protagonist of *El licenciado Vidriera*, for example, makes a clear distinction between the work done by talented artists and that done by those who are lacking in talent; the text of the *novela* explains: “Vio un día en la acera de San Francisco unas figuras pintadas de mala mano, y dijo que los buenos pintores imitaban la naturaleza; pero que los malos la vomitaban.” *La fuerza de la sangre*, to consider an example from just one other text in Cervantes’s collection of stories, likewise comments on the relationship between artists and their creations. At the end of this *novela*, when Rodolfo’s mother shows him a portrait of an extremely ugly woman who, she says, is to be his wife, the young man responds: “Si los pintores que ordinariamente suelen ser pródigos de la hermosura con los rostros que retratan, lo han sido también con éste, sin duda creo que el original debe de ser la misma fealdad.” In both cases quoted here, and in other instances found throughout the stories, Cervantes’s characters comment on the role of the artist in society and the very purpose of artistic creation. My paper analyzes these references to art and artists in the *Novelas ejemplares* and shows the many parallels that can be drawn between how Cervantes describes artists and their art, on the one hand, and the ways that he discusses writers and their literary creations on the other.