

Models and Their Artists: The Dichotomous Representation of Women in
The Unknown Masterpiece, *Manette Salomon* and *The Masterpiece*

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(ABSTRACT)

This thesis proposes to analyze the dichotomous representation of the female model as benevolent and malevolent in three 19th-century French novels. Honoré de Balzac's *The Unknown Masterpiece* (1834), Jules and Edmond de Goncourt's *Manette Salomon* (1867), and Émile Zola's *The Masterpiece* (1886) are all novels set in artist's workshops and all portray the female model as playing an essential role in determining the success, then demise of the male painter. My study of these texts will therefore focus on the juxtaposed presentations of the female models in terms of their relationships to the male artists. It will reveal how as the artists succeed in transforming their models' bodies into aesthetic nudes and containing these representations within the parameters of their canvases as a means of asserting their authority, the models are positively portrayed. On the contrary, when the artists fail to transform and contain their models' bodies, these female characters are negatively depicted as being the source of the painters' ruin. By examining this dichotomous representation of the female models, I will reveal the complex means by which the patriarchal order within the texts oppresses the female characters.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: The Un/known Female in <i>The Unknown Masterpiece</i>	18
Chapter 3: The Female Frame(d) in <i>Manette Salomon</i>	32
Chapter 4: The Un/lucky Woman in <i>The Masterpiece</i>	44
Chapter 5: Conclusion	56
Bibliography	52
Curriculum Vitae	64