

Exploring the Male Gaze and Power Relations in Tracy Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*

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ABSTRACT

The interwoven relationship between art and literature is exemplified in the eminent novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier (1999). This novel is inspired by the painting with the same title, created by Johannes Vermeer (1665-1666). The artwork serves as a visual narrative, sparking literary interpretations and inspiring various written works. The mysterious gaze of the girl in the painting, coupled with the subtle play of light, has prompted writers to craft stories, poems, and novels, examining the imagined life and emotions of the subject. This article investigates the novel by focusing on the connections between the painting and the narration, each form enriches and complements the other in a harmonious blend of creativity. It will discuss how intertextuality is presented by applying Julia Kristeva's theory, as well as highlighting the main character's victimization of the male gaze as discussed by Laura Mulvey's psychoanalyst interpretations. This paves the way to illustrating the power relations between a master and a maid through Micheal Foucault's theories.

1. Introduction

1.1 *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Tracy Chevalier

The novel takes inspiration from Johannes Vermeer's work of art of the same name: *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. It was published in 1999 by Tracy Chevalier – she is an American-British novelist, who is known for her second novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, which brought her widespread recognition. Born on October 19, 1962, in Washington, D.C., Chevalier has written several other novels, often exploring historical and artistic themes. Chevalier's literary texts often combine diligent historical research with compelling storytelling, making her a prominent figure in historical fiction (Zumrotun, 2016, p. 7).

There are not many historical facts available about the work of art by Vermeer, the novel is mostly fictional. Chevalier narrates a story about the girl in the painting. The protagonist is named Griet, who is hired by Vermeer's family as a maid, gradually she becomes his assistant as well as his model. Griet receives the attention of her master which makes his wife Cathrina jealous. The author attempts to portray how a Dutch young woman in the 17th century from a middle-class family adjusts to working in the painter's house. This article delves into the connection between visual arts and literature by discussing the notion of intertextuality. The victimization of Griet as a result of the male gaze, as well as discussing the power relations between Vermeer and Griet.

1.2 *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Johannes Vermeer

This renowned painting by the Dutch painter Johannes Vermeer often dubbed "The Dutch Mona Lisa" is estimated to have been painted between (1665-1666). Vermeer is widely embraced for painting the domestic life of the middle class, he mostly painted in his studio at his house. *Girl with a Pearl Earring* was not discovered until 1881 when it was bought at an auction in The Hague, later on it was associated with Vermeer's work.

The girl in the painting is gazing over her shoulders directly at the audience with her bright eyes and her mouth slightly open (Figure 1). The eyes of the observer are pointed to her soft skin and the glint in her eyes which is highlighted by the dark

background (Duparc & Wheelock, 1995, p. 166). Strikingly, one of its most unique parts is that she is wearing a big pearl earring despite wearing a maid's clothes. Thus, both symbolize two contradictory ideas: purity and wealth (Vieira, 2007, p. 16). The painting is fascinating to the viewers and art critics because it is different from his other works. The anonymity of the young woman and the historical background of the painting have puzzled art critics for hundreds of years. It is speculated that she might have been one of Vermeer's daughters or a maid. Even if one is unfamiliar with Vermeer as an artist, they might have seen *Girl with a Pearl Earring* continuously – it is a cultural phenomenon. It has been turned into book covers, magazines, posters, and merchandise.



Figure 1: *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by Joannes Vermeer (Artsper, 2022)

2. Literature Review

Chevalier describes the painting process of various canvases by Vermeer not just *Girl with a Pearl Earring*; for instance, *The Milkmaid*, *Woman with a Pearl Necklace*, *The Girl with the Wineglass*, and *View of Delft*. This is the reason that the novel has become an interesting topic for art critics and literary scholars. Mostly, critics have reflected on the novel in terms of the creation of art: colors, texture, and lighting.

Vieira's thesis titled: *Art and new media: Vermeer's work under different semiotic systems* (2007), takes a broader perspective on the influence of the twentieth century on visual arts. The thesis explores how the movie adaptation and a subsequent novel contributed to the renewal of public interest in Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. The researcher focuses on analyzing the non-verbal signs in the various paintings that are mentioned in the novel and the movie adaptation according to semiotics theory.

Percec's study titled: *Feminine and Artistic Identities: Tracy Chevalier's Novels* (2009), explores the themes of female identity and loneliness in three of Chevallier's novels. It attempts to discuss the author's main female protagonists and their portrayal throughout different historical backgrounds. Moreover, Percec explains that Griet has to risk her reputation and virtue for Vermeer's satisfaction. For the purpose of the painting, she has to pierce her ears. The researcher explains it as the loneliest moment in the novel. While she starts crying because of the pain that the piercing causes her, there is no one to comfort her. Although the female narrator is portrayed as passive, she still appears smart: "Under the downplaying appearance of a maid lies the secret, indispensable woman, whose mythical hair, once unveiled, unleashes her unsuspected sensuality, unfortunately channelled in the end" (p. 369). Moreover, Percec explains that Chevalier's female characters remain ambiguous but they are resilient.

Zumrotun's paper titled: *Social inequality reflected In Tracy Chevalier's Girl With A Pearl Earring status conflict caused by broken stereotype and expected role* (2016), discusses the representation of social inequality in the novel by analyzing it according to sociological theories. Furthermore, it deliberates on the conflicts between Griet and Cathrina as a cause of their class differences. The conflict that the researcher focuses on is when Griet becomes accused of stealing Cathrina's jewelry to wear in Vermeer's painting. Thus, it results in social conflict because the earring is a symbol of wealth and since she is from a lower class she is not allowed to be presented in such a manner.

Uzundemir's study titled: *A Maid Came Free": From Sighting to Citing in Tracy Chevalier's Girl with a Pearl Earring* (2018), delves into Griet's role in becoming

Vermeer's art critic. In the novel, it is mentioned that her father used to be a tile painter, thus she has enough knowledge about art to discuss it with her master. It is also one of the reasons why Vermeer chooses her as the maid to clean his studio. When they meet for the first time at her house, she organizes the vegetables by their color tones while making soup. So, from this, we can grasp that she pays attention to the pigmentation of colors. Therefore, Uzundemir highlights how colors are presented: "Griet recognizes how the painter plays with the colors of objects to reflect the light coming from the window, and from then on she observes the world with a painter's eye" (p. 7). Moreover, it is explained that Griet's perspective on the use of light changes, and she realizes how Vermeer uses paint to create more life-like paintings.

This article, sheds light on power relations and the male gaze which leads to the events of the novel. As well as, how the inspiration of the painting brings the novel into being, utilizing intertextuality, psychoanalysis, and feminist theory. It is to enrich the narrative surrounding this iconic masterpiece. The use of intertextuality in this article is to interpret the strong relation between the painting as an art and the novel as a literary text. The painting gives a hand to the readers of the novel to be able to understand the way power dynamics is focused on in the novel, during the artists painting of the art piece. The separation of the novel and the painting are not quite possible, because the literary text is inspired by the painting. It will analyze the relation between the painting and how it is represented in the text. It further portrays the process of the painting and the relation between the painter and the servant.

3. Theoretical Framework

Art and literature are intertwined in various ways, they both inspire one another. Literary works about art bring paintings to life; they give them a voice. This article attempts to investigate how visual arts inspire literary texts by explaining how the author has utilized intertextuality as a device in *Girl with a Pearl Earring*. Intertextuality refers to the interrogation of a text within a text either explicitly or implicitly. The clearest form of intertextuality is a direct quotation from another piece of writing (Vieira, 2007, p. 62). The French Philosopher and literary critic Julia Kristeva

was the first one to introduce the term “intertextuality”. It is the notion that no writer has an original text or thought, all texts are interconnected and inspired by existing ideas. Besides, she declares: “a permutation of texts, intertextuality in the given text,” where “several utterances, taken from other texts intersect and neutralize one another” (as cited in Raj, 2015, p. 78). Thus, from this one can understand that a literary text is formed by a group of quotations that have been adapted by other ideas or texts.

Chevalier uses the literary device “ekphrasis” to provide a detailed description of Vermeer’s paintings. Ekphrasis is defined as: “verbal re-creations of visual artwork” (as cited in KhosraviShakib, 2012, p. 183). Thus, it is a verbal illustration of any type of art whether a painting or a sculpture. Therefore, the researchers will investigate how this literary device is used in the novel by blending fiction and historical facts about the painter’s life.

The novel does not only refer to the painting but it illustrates a thorough depiction to the reader about how women used to behave and be treated in the seventeenth century. The novel tries to explore how Vermeer fetishizes the maid by using her as his model. The idea of the male gaze and the objectification of Griet can be interpreted by Laura Mulvey’s theory on how females in art and cinema are treated and portrayed differently than men to satisfy the male viewer (Mulvey, 2013, p. 806). Eventually, this male gaze seems to construct the power relation which is explained in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975) by Michel Foucault, in other words, the male gaze plays a crucial role in objectifying and subjectifying the female figure. (Fatah & Ahmed, 2023, p. 10).

Eventually, when Vermeer obliges Griet to pose for his painting we can see how different power dynamics between a maid and a master are played out. The French Philosopher Michel Foucault examines how power in society is forced upon people more specifically in institutions (Sergiu, 2010, p. 37). Thus, this article will attempt to interpret the relationship between Griet and Vermeer by applying Foucault's theories on power.

4. Discussion and Results

Tracy Chevalier borrows elements of the painting to create a fictional identity of the girl in the oil canvas – since she is dressed in a maid’s clothes, in the novel she is portrayed as Vermeer’s maid. At the beginning of the novel, the reader discovers that she is obliged to work despite her young age, as a result of her father’s loss of sight in an accident. Therefore, Griet has to provide for her family. Griet is first hired to clean her master’s studio which is portrayed as a sacred place for the painter to be creative – only his mother-in-law, one of his daughters, and his art dealer are allowed within the space. Gradually, Vermeer orders Griet to mix color pigmentations for him, and eventually, she becomes his muse.

The author references Vermeer’s other works and describes the Dutch life in the seventeenth century. This evokes Julia Kristeva’s intertextual concept which shows that every text is influenced by existing texts. The whole painting process by Vermeer is thoroughly described verbally. Vermeer mostly painted maids while doing chores, thus, Griet expects that she would do the same. However, the master says: “I want to paint you as I first saw you, Griet. Just you” (Chevalier, 1999, p. 170). He tells her to stand by the window and turn around to look at him over her shoulders. Apparently, it makes Griet uncomfortable to pose as someone she is not. This might suggest that the master thinks of Griet more than as a maid, and wants to portray her beauty.

Non-verbal signs of the painting are interpreted and illustrated in the novel. For example, the girl’s gaze may suggest intimacy and a bond with the audience. Similarly, in the novel, it conveys sexual attraction between the master and the maid. Griet’s gaze represents how safe the female gaze is in contrast to the male gaze which has consequences on her and the upcoming events. Griet from the beginning seems to show interest in Vermeer when she expresses to the reader that she does not want to think about him as a husband and a father, she states she wants to think of him alone at his studio: “I did not like to think of him in that way, with his wife and children, I preferred to think of him alone in his studio. Or not alone but with me” (Chevalier, 1999, p. 74). However, her actions do not indicate that she wants to replace Cathrina.

Moreover, Griet describes the attraction between her and Vermeer when he tells her to look at his eyes while he is painting her. The narrator's inner monologue tells the reader how he was painting her for a long time but she did not notice it because she was captivated by him. We can fathom how the girl's gaze is shown in the narration as a hint of Griet's sensuality. She also explains that she poses for him for other paintings as well: "It was the part of the week I liked best, with his eyes on only me for those hours" (Chevalier, 1999, p. 180). The two characters do not express to each other their sexual desires; however, it is portrayed through gaze and touch. In the following quotation it is hinted at how her gaze is receptive by Vermeer:

I looked at him-his eyes were with me now. He was looking at me. As we gazed at each other a ripple of heat passed through my body. I kept my eyes at his, though, until at last he looked away and cleared his throat (Chevalier, 1999, p. 171).

When we view the painting, we can see the girl's lips are apart and have a gloss over them. This can evoke various opinions and meanings behind it. For instance, she might be uttering a word. But the novel portrays it as a form of sexual interpretation – what is suggested here is that interpretations change from one to another. Thus, this phenomenon demonstrates Kristeva's concept of intertextuality, in which she declares that she does not view a text as a single piece of writing. Rather, it is all texts are interconnected; thus, a text can be analyzed through different points of view: "This conversation which the author enters into is a creative dialogue where meaning is arranged or composed rather than created" (as cited in Raj, 2015, p. 80). In other words, the representation of the young woman's facial expressions can be viewed from various angles – suggesting that writing in itself is adapting from other discourses. Hitherto, in the narration, the girl's gleaming lips are shown when Vermeer tells Griet to keep her mouth open and lick them, she appears surprised by the request thinking to herself: "Virtuous women did not open their mouths in paintings" (Chevalier, 1999, p. 188). One might assume that this embodies Griet's sexualization. From this perspective, this can be analyzed that she feels Vermeer is objectifying her for the sake of his art. Vermeer paints her for a male character named Van Ruijven, who is an art dealer. He has his eyes on Griet, who forces himself on her

and tells her when he has the painting, she will officially be possessed by him, which indicates that he views the protagonist as a piece of property who can give him pleasure. That is to say, Griet's inferiority portrays the notion of patriarchy. She is viewed as the inferior sex in comparison to the other male characters who are shown to be superior and in control of her life and decisions.

Griet's objectification and inferiority can be interpreted with Laura Mulvey's theory on how women become objectified for the pleasure of men's eyes. In her essay titled: *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema* (2013), she declares how art and cinema create various types of pleasures. One of these pleasures is called "scopophilia", which means the pleasure of looking at a human form. The terminology was first coined by the psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. Mulvey explains that this type of pleasure becomes recognizable in the mirror stage when a child recognizes his/her own image. The child becomes aware of his sexuality which is a theory explained by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. Mulvey believes that this theory is relevant in her essay because it is intertwined with the pleasures one experiences by gazing at a human body (pp. 806-807). Hence, women are objectified and depicted erotically for attracting the man; "she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire" (p. 809). Considering this theory, we can speculate that Vermeer is attempting to portray her in a sexually suggestive manner to satisfy Ruijven/himself.

Ekphrasis in the novel appears when Vermeer allows her to see the painting because, after months of the painting process, he is not pleased with it. The narrator expresses the painting's details very descriptively as shown in the following quotation:

The painting was like none of his others. It was just of me, of my head and shoulders, with no tables or curtains, no windows or powder-brushes to soften and distract. He had painted me with my eyes wide, the light falling across my face but the left side of me in shadow. I was wearing blue and yellow and brown. The cloth wound round my head made me look not like myself, but like Griet from another town, even from another country altogether. The background was black, making me appear very much alone, although I was clearly looking at someone. I seemed to be waiting for something I did not think would ever happen (Chevalier, 1999, pp. 181-182).

The use of ekphrasis benefits a reader who has never seen the painting because it expresses every element of it, it visualizes it and brings it to life. Here we can hear the words of the subject painting a picture in the reader's mind. The narrator's portrayal becomes a fascinating observation of identity through visual features. The detailed depiction of the painting's eyes, clothing in blue and yellow, and the transformative effect of the headscarf provide a nuanced understanding. The choice of a black background intensifies the sense of solitude, while the gaze directed at someone suggests a narrative depth. This ekphrasis, found in Chevalier's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, exemplifies the power of words to evoke the visual and emotional nuances of a painting. It showcases the ability of literature to breathe life into art, offering readers a sensory experience beyond the canvas.

Additionally, Vermeer's dissatisfaction leads to his decision that Griet must wear his wife's pearl earring. He explains it is the only missing piece. Griet becomes upset by this, but her master pays no attention as shown in the following quotation:

He had seen Catharina's pearl and that was what he would make me wear. He used what he wanted for his paintings, without considering the result ... When Catharina saw her earring in the painting she would explode. I should have begged him not to ruin me (Chevalier, 1999 p. 185).

The word "ruin" is said multiple times by Griet when she expresses how frightened she is about his actions. "Ruin" has various definitions, one meaning that can be linked to the text is: "loss of chastity in a woman" (Collin Dictionary, n. d.). Thus, her speech can be interpreted that not only her reputation as a woman will be ruined, he will be the reason that she will lose her virtue, virginity, and honor. Kristeva explains how in the notion of intertextuality meanings of words change over time, and the interpretation of a word relies on the cultural, social, and historical background of the text (as cited in Raj, 2015, pp. 79-80). Therefore, while analyzing Griet's narration the possibility of the different connotations of specific words should be considered.

Griet is afraid of how Cathrina might act when she uncovers the truth about her jewelry. She is also indecisive about wearing them because it symbolizes the loss of her identity, since she is a maid and will not be able to replace Cathrina's place.

Vermeer becomes angry with her when she refuses to wear them and forces her to do as he says. After that when she prepares herself, Vermeer sees her hair for the first time and she explains he is no longer angry with her. Griet is a devoted Protestant who always wears a turban on her head, she mentions he was the first one to see her hair. Furthermore, she thinks that since he has seen her hair, she has nothing to hide, and she receives pleasure from it as well. When her hair is revealed and her ears are pierced, it symbolizes the loss of her virtue: “He traced the side of my face up to my cheek, then blotted the tears that spilled from my eyes with his thumb. He ran his thumb over my lower lip. I licked it and tasted salt” (Chevalier, 1999, p. 198). Hence, Griet’s words tell the reader that she is attracted to Vermeer and that she has lost her purity as a result.

The painter’s attitude toward Griet is considered a mistreatment of power, and it takes us back to Michel Foucault’s power relations of the dominant over the subordinate. The way he obliges her to do what he desires indicates that he wants to form a new identity for her the way he wants to without Griet’s approval. Griet clarifies that she feels she cannot argue with his choices as illustrated in this quotation: “But he was my master. I was meant to do as he said” (Chevalier, 1999, p. 54). According to Foucault’s theory (1980), it can be explained that Vermeer’s social position allows him to suppress Griet. Viewed in this light, she is not regarded as one of the family nor the social class which makes him regard her as the other and a tool to his satisfaction. Hereafter, all of this would result in her abandonment after the completion of the painting. She declares that she is no more of importance to him, as she states in the novel: “Now that the painting was finished, he no longer wanted me” (Chevalier, 1999, p. 200). Griet at one moment might have felt that her master was attracted to her, however, these words affirm that she feels used by Vermeer’s actions. But she feels powerless in front of her master.

After the painting is finished, his wife sees it while no one is in the studio, which causes arguments between the spouses. Then, Vermeer, Cathrina, and her mother Maria Thins call Griet to the studio and they want to blame Griet for wearing the earring. Although it was Vermeer’s idea, and the mother-in-law helped them to take the earrings from Cathrina’s jewelry box. Here, it is clear that she is not only

oppressed by the male character, but by the female characters too. Because the mother-in-law wants Vermeer to sell more paintings and bring money to the household, it makes her hide this fact from her daughter and disregard her feelings. Instead of confessing their guilt to Cathrina, they face Griet and allude to that she is a thief because she is a maid: “Well, girl my daughter wants to know how you come to be wearing her earring?” (p. 203). Griet was not only oppressed by Vermeer but by the wife and the mother-in-law as well, as mentioned in Virginia Woolf’s *A Room of One’s Own*: “Women are hard on women. Women dislike women” (2012, p. 106). However, the wife is also a victim of oppression and male dominance as she searches for Vermeer’s approval of her beauty: “Why?, ... have you never painted me?” (Chevalier, 1999, p. 204). Foucault declares that power is not a position. Rather, it is a method that is used and passed through a chain of people:

Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain . . . Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization . . . Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (1980, p. 98).

Therefore, from Foucault’s analysis, we can see how it is related to the chain of power in the narration, Maria Thins oppresses Vermeer to bring money into the household. Cathrina is ignored by Vermeer and uses Griet for his financial benefit. Cathrina attempts to assert her authority over everyone while we, as the reader, realize Maria Thins is the one who runs the household secretly. When Griet asks them to visit her family because of the plague, Cathrina disapproves of it, then Griet looks at Maria Thins for her assistance which makes Cathrina angry because it is clear she wants to show her power over her maids: ““I have said no,” she announced. It is *I* who decide what you can and cannot do. Have you forgotten that?” (Chevalier, 1999, p. 60). The italicized “*I*” in this quotation demonstrates the emphasis of Cathrina’s intention to show she is the decision maker. Catherina in this passage is asserting her authority – it sets with Foucault’s ideas on power dynamics, where individuals or groups exert control through discourses and institutions. The character’s explanation signifies her ability to shape the boundaries of what others can or cannot do, reflecting the

dynamics of power as understood by Foucault (1977, p. 194). This is an expression of power relations and the negotiation of authority within the social context of the novel. It clarifies that Catherina wishes to make sure that Griet understands her abilities and she also wants to make it clear to all that she wills to confirm the house and keep the disciplines.

5. Conclusion

This article examined Tracy Chevalier's novel *Girl with a Pearl Earring* inspired by Johannes Vermeer's painting by the same name. It weaved together the realms of art, literature, and power dynamics. Through intricate intertextuality, the novel not only breathes life into Johannes Vermeer's painting but also unveils the complex relationships and power structures inherent in society. This article is a poignant exploration of feminism, exposing the hardships faced by women during that era. Examining the characters' psychology, the article represented a nuanced portrayal of the intricate interplay between individuals and societal expectations, creating a compelling narrative that resonates with the enduring complexities of human experiences.

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دۆزینەو هی تیروانی نیینه و په یوه ندییه کانی هیز له رۆمانی گیرل و ده پیرل
ئیرینگ تراسی شیقالیه

پوخته:

ئهم وتاره باس له په یوه ندی نیوان هونه ر و ئه ده ب ده کات له رۆمانی گیرل و ده پیرل ئیرینگ له نووسینی تراسی چیقالیه (۱۹۹۹). که له ژیر کاریگری تابلویه ک به هه مان ناو نیشان له لایه ن یوهانس قیرمیر دروستکراوه (۱۶۶۶-۱۶۶۵). کاره هونه ریه که وه ک چیرۆکیکی بینراو خزمه ت ده کات که بۆته هۆکاری ئیلهام به خشی بۆ چه ن دین لیکدان هوه ی ئه ده بی و کاری نووسراوی جورا و جور. نیگا پر نه پنیه که ی کچه که له تابلۆکه دا، هاوکات له گه ل به کاره پنیانی زیره کانه ی رووناکی، بۆته هاندەر یکی

باشى نوسهران بۆ نوسىنى چىرۆك و ھۆنراوھو رۆمان بە جەخت كوردنەوھ لەسەر پەيوەندييەكانى نىوان تابلۆكە و رۆمانە ئەدەبىيەكە. ئەم دوو پارچەيە ھەريەكى رۆلى ھەيە لە دەولەمەندکردنى ئەوھى تريان و ھەك تەواوكرى يەكترن ھەك تىكەلەيەكى داھينەرانە. چۆنيەتى بەكارھيئەتاني بىردۆزەكەى جوليا كرىستىفا ھەروھە تيشك خستنە سەر قوربانىكردنى كەسايەتى سەرەكى لە تىروانىنى نىرپنە ھەك ئەوھى لەلايەن لىكدانەوھ دەروونىيەكانى لاورا مولقىھوھ باسكراوھ. ئەمەش دەبىتە ھۆى روونكردنەوھى پەيوەندييەكانى دەسەلات لە نىوان نىگاركىشىك و خزمەتكارەكەى لە رىگەى بىردۆزەكانى مېشىل فۆكۆوھ.

استكشاف نظرة الذكور وعلاقات القوة في فتاة تريسي شوفالييه ذات القرط اللؤلؤي

المخلص:

تتجلى العلاقة المتشابكة بين الفن والأدب في الرواية البارزة "فتاة ذات قرط لؤلؤي" لتريسي شوفالييه (١٩٩٩). وهي مستوحاة من اللوحة التي تحمل نفس العنوان، والتي أنشأها يوهانس فيرمير (١٦٦٥-١٦٦٦). العمل الفني بمثابة سرد بصري، يثير التفسيرات الأدبية ويلهم العديد من الأعمال المكتوبة. دفعت النظرة الغامضة للفتاة في اللوحة، ممزوجة بالعرض الدقيق للضوء، الكتاب إلى صياغة القصص والقصائد والروايات، وفحص الحياة المتخيلة وعواطف الموضوع. تبحث هذه المقالة في الرواية من خلال التركيز على الروابط بين اللوحة والسرد، كل شكل يثري ويكمل الآخر في مزيج متناغم من الإبداع. سيناقش كيف يتم تقديم التناص من خلال تطبيق نظرية جوليا كرىستيفا. بالإضافة إلى تسليط الضوء على إيذاء الشخصية الرئيسية لنظرة الذكور كما ناقشتها تفسيرات المحلل النفسي لورا مولفي. وهذا يؤدي إلى توضيح علاقات القوة بين السيد والخادمة من خلال نظريات ميشل فوكو.