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## The Thoughtless Image

Gualtieri, Elena

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## The thoughtless image: Woolf, Rancière on photography

ELENA GUALTIERI  
UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN

1. **O**n the Acropolis in Athens, Jacob Flanders is reading a book; he stops, momentarily, to think “Why not rule countries the way they should be ruled?”, then goes on reading again until he puts the book down “to write a note upon the importance of history — upon democracy”. Around him swarm French ladies; to escape their chattering, Jacob stands up and walks in front of the Erechtheum. The “several women standing there holding the roof on their heads” first inspire him to imitation — “Jacob straightened himself slightly; for stability and balance affect the body first” — then to deflation — “These statues” (no longer “women”) “annulled things so”. Turning away from their unyielding stare, Jacob is confronted by another, modern version of his nullification into an object:

and there was Madame Lucien Gravé perched on a block of marble with her kodak pointed at his head. Of course she jumped down, in spite of her age, her figure, and her tight boots — having now that her daughter was married, lapsed with a luxurious abandonment, grand enough in its way, into the fleshy grotesque; she jumped down, but not before Jacob had seen her.

“Damn these women — damn these women!” he thought. And he went to fetch his book which he had left lying on the ground in the Parthenon.<sup>1</sup>

2. Everything and everyone, it seems, in this passage is being annihilated and, as we used to say, objectified. Jacob’s dreams of grandeur are rudely interrupted by the aptly named Mme Gravé, whose action of wielding camera as if it was a gun prefigures, as William Handley and others have noted, Jacob’s mortality: the engraver of his image, she is also his grave-digger.<sup>2</sup> But Madame Gravé has “herself” already been annulled: she has no proper name, and is not even afforded the self-reflection Clarissa will articulate just a few years later: “She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no

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1 V. Woolf, *Jacob’s Room*, 209.

2 W. Handley, “War and the Politics of Narration in *Jacob’s Room*”, in *Virginia Woolf and War: Fiction, Reality and Myth*, 110-33.

more having children now [...] this being Mrs Dalloway; not even Clarissa any more; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway”.<sup>3</sup> Further down on the road to dissolution (unlike Elizabeth, her daughter is already married), Mme Gruvé has taken the other tried and tested route to compensate for her loss of self and become abundantly, gloriously fat. Her submission to the pleasures of the table is so complete that it becomes a triumph, an affirmation wrought of annihilation. The camera she wields seems part of that triumph; it allows her to do to others what the social machinery has done to her. Unwillingly, Jacob is made to share the fate of Mme Gruvé and the other unnamed French ladies, the fate of the Caryatids themselves, condemned to prop up the roof with their heads for eternity. Leonard Woolf’s verdict on first reading *Jacob’s Room* might have been inspired by this passage: “he says it is very strange: I have no philosophy of life he says; my people are puppets, moved hither & thither by fate”.<sup>4</sup>

3. Another way to put this is to say that Mme Gruvé is quite simply thoughtless: inconsiderate of Jacob’s feelings, she interrupts his meditations and thus curtails the future he has been projecting in front of himself, a future, it is intimated, as a colonial ruler and “bringer” of democracy, as if democracy was a gift, an object or a privilege to bestow. The abundance of her flesh, her fatness is a typically Woolfian shorthand for this thoughtlessness: she is ample because she stands in for the unthinking mass of French ladies buzzing across the hallowed ground of the Acropolis, vacantly wondering if it’ll rain. Her thoughtlessness, it must be said, is not simply absence of thought, but thought misdirected to the wrong object: Jacob rather than the statues; the weather rather than history or democracy; carnal pleasures rather than food for thought. We can read all this in Mme Gruvé the moment we catch her, through Jacob’s eyes, “with a kodak pointed at his head”, the loss of the capital K marking the transformation from proper name to household object, a transformation Mme Gruvé herself has already undergone. But “kodak” for camera shows that Mme Gruvé and Jacob inhabit, after all, a shared space and time that we could call modernity if you like, but that in any case cuts Jacob off from his troubled identification with the Greeks. The photographic camera functions to signify history and technological change, a particular “now”, that wakes Jacob up from his dream of omnipotence to plunge him straight back into a modern Acropolis, contaminated by the triviality of the everyday. While we don’t get to see the image Mme Gruvé takes of Jacob, nor do we know if she was in time to take one, all the signs point to the fact that had she taken a photograph, it would have been aesthetically and philosophically insignificant.
4. The thoughtless image works, then, in this extract in multiple and layered ways. It stands in stark contrast with a cultural heritage in which the Classics are used to bolster British imperial ambitions and legitimise a ruling class; it is something shared or enjoyed in common by the people, those to whom the ruling is done; primarily, and with more difficulties and

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3 V. Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway*, 11.

4 V. Woolf, *The Diary of Virginia Woolf*: 2, 186

hesitations, it provides a model for writing from a position that is half-way between enunciating subject and, simply, part of the furniture, a technique Woolf will later refine in “Time Passes”. That position is often marked by the use of the indefinite pronoun — “one” — that designates a certain roominess between “I” and “you”: “Jacob’s rooms were in Neville’s Court; at the top; so that reaching his door one went in a little out of breath; but he wasn’t there”.<sup>5</sup> “One” is of course one of Jacob’s friends, and therefore the classical marker of a certain class position; yet soon afterwards the rooms are described in Jacob’s absence and the position of “one” is taken up by the narrative voice in the refrain that will echo again throughout the novel: “Listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtains; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker armchair creaks, though no one sits there”.<sup>6</sup> A few pages later, the listless air will have become the more substantial “midnight wind”, taking on “like a veiled figure suddenly woken” full allegorical figuration as “the veiled lady step[ping] through the Courts of Trinity”.<sup>7</sup> Spacious enough to accommodate friends, the elements and the ghostly presence of the narrator, “one” is also the near-invisible presence in which Leonard spotted the hand of fate, a renunciation for Woolf of the authorial position, or rather the making visible, perceptible of the hand that pulls the strings. It is also the position from which we see Mme Gravé, half-way between complete externality — a fat woman surprisingly agile when caught in the act — and subjective self-representation, giving us an insight into her life story that could not have been shared by Jacob. The thoughtlessness of the photographic image is imported into language to infect the class-positioning of “one”, turning representativeness — Jacob’s or Mme Gravé’s — into self-alienation: if one stands for a whole group — or class — than one is quite simply many.

5. Woolf’s thoughtless image, or the thoughtless image I extracted from Woolf’s writing is meant to work as a question put to Jacques Rancière’s notion of the pensive image. The comma in my title signals what I think is a disjunction between the way in which photography appears in Woolf’s writing, and how Rancière thinks about it. In the pensive image Rancière has identified “a zone of indeterminacy between thought and non-thought, activity and passivity, but also between art and non-art”.<sup>8</sup> Such an indeterminate image marks a transition from the mimetic regime to the aesthetic one. In the mimetic the image fully translates the thought of the work, and intensifies its expression — Rancière’s example is an eagle for majesty, but we could also think of a kodak for a multitude of images and the image as a multitude. In the aesthetic regime “the relationship of convenience [...] between the ‘literal’ term and the ‘figurative’ one”<sup>9</sup> no longer obtains: the two levels of signification are still present, but their relationship is unmotivated, or indeterminate. This is why we are no longer able to “read”

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5 V. Woolf, *Jacob’s Room*, 48.

6 V. Woolf, *Jacob’s Room*, 49.

7 *Ibid.*, 58.

8 J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 107.

9 *Ibid.*, 121.

people, their social identity and/or situation, as the narrator of *Jacob's Room* keeps on reminding us: something in the image resists “the thought of the person who has produced it and of the person who seeks to identify it”.<sup>10</sup> This resistance is of a different order from that of the thoughtless image. For in the pensive image it is produced when one art form is interrogated by another — literature by photography, in this case — whereas the thoughtless image does not question: it is, in Kodak's famous slogan, the meeting point of an automatic reflex with the automation of image-making: “You press the button, we do the rest”.

6. But if Rancière's definition of the pensive image does not quite capture Mme Gravé's thoughtless wielding of the camera, it nevertheless seems tailor-made to fit another kind of intermingling or contamination of literature by photography in Woolf's practice: the illustrations she commissioned and chose for *Orlando*. Although these are often called photographs, and are all in a technical sense photographic reproductions, the eight plates are in fact evenly divided between paintings and photographs. This distinction is however no sooner invoked than it is annulled. While all the photographs undoubtedly portray a real historical person — one is Angelica Bell, the others are all of Vita Sackville-West -- they also work to designate what photography should not normally be able to portray: the fictional characters of Sasha and Orlando. This combination of very different and apparently contradictory functions is achieved by making all the photographs imitate either paintings or previous photographic styles, in which the distinction between photography, painting and literature had already been blurred. The Lenare photograph captioned in the novel as “Orlando on Her Return to England” was set up to look like a Lely (Figure 1), while the one of “Orlando at the present time” has been described as an imitation of the classical pose of the landowner.<sup>11</sup> “The Russian Princess as a Child” has strong affinities with Julia Margaret Cameron's style (Figure 2); the inadequate costuming of “Orlando around the year 1840” reprises Cameron's rather cavalier approach to staging with inadequate props.<sup>12</sup> The logic of citation infects the paintings too: “Orlando as a boy” is an extract from a double painting already published in *Knole and the Sackvilles* (1922); “the Archduchess Harriet” winks at Gheeraerts's famous Ditchley portrait of Queen Elizabeth (Figure 3) and at the Cadiz portrait of the Earl of Essex, in which John Maynard Keynes will see the features of Lytton Strachey on publication of *Elizabeth and Essex*. “Orlando as Ambassador” and “Marmaduke Bonthrop Shelmerdine” are improbably yet convincingly joined by their resemblance to the Lenare.

7. This mutual infection or contamination of one art form by another produces the indeterminacy of art forms that is essential to Woolf's purpose: constructing a visible representation of what Orlando's biographer claims to be impossible, that is, the indeterminacy or oscillation of

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>11</sup> E. Flesher, “Mock Biography and Photography”, 45.

<sup>12</sup> D. Gillespie, “Her Kodak Pointed at His Head”, 115, 140.

Orlando's sexual identity. Paintings of men styling long hair sit cheek-by-jowl with photographs of women sporting fashionably shingled hair; by cancelling or disturbing the boundary that separates painting from photography Woolf can produce the fiction that all these different men and one woman are effectively the same person, simply clad in different garbs. To portray the indeterminate character of Orlando's sex requires then too that the images be indeterminate in terms of their temporality. While the style of the paintings may be easily recognisable and classifiable (early Flemish, Roccoco, and Romantic), the insertion of the two impossibly anachronistic photographs (Angelica and the Lenare) means that these images are cut loose from any kind of referential tie we may have been tempted to ascribe them.

8. And yet the way in which the images of *Orlando* figure their indeterminacy of medium, sex and time is entirely reliant on a principle of resemblance. The Lenare that was set up in Lely's flattering style ("Good, but not like", in Pepys's pithy comment) ended up as a dead ringer for Rosalba Carriera's portrait of Lionel Sackville, "Orlando as Ambassador", one of the earliest images Woolf settled on.<sup>13</sup> With his dark colouring, softly waved hair, and light moustache Lionel offered a befitting visual translation for Woolf's own first description of Vita: "florid, moustached, parakeet coloured, with all the supple ease of the aristocracy".<sup>14</sup> The Carriera portrait was also of course a perfect "fit" for an Orlando that was about to turn into a woman, suggesting an inborn propensity towards ambiguous sexual identity even before the actual sex change. Carriera's high Roccoco style matched the allegorical excesses of the scene of sex-change Woolf was composing just as she was choosing the paintings. It also echoed Sackville-West's fruity description of the Venetian Ambassador's bedroom at Knole, a room with "a bloom like the bloom on a bowl of grapes and figs. I cannot keep the simile, which may convey nothing to those who have not seen the room, out of my mind. Greens and pinks originally bright, now dusted and tarnished over".<sup>15</sup> Resemblance is then not just a family affair, but an artistic and stylistic procedure too: photographs that look like paintings that sound like rooms that look like grapes and figs, and so on. The temptation to simile is so pervasive that it comes to encompass even the nameless. Woolf chose an anonymous portrait, bought by Vita at auction, to impersonate Shelmerdine, but an anonymous portrait that shares with both the Carriera and the Lenare its three-quarter, half-bust pose, and looks remarkably like Vita. This extension of the principle of resemblance to well beyond the reaches of the genealogical tree turns Orlando into everyman or everywoman, everyone, as it were — the people's toff.
9. The pressure Woolf applies on family resemblance and literary similes imports into *Orlando* Sackville-West's belief in the representativeness of the family line:

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13 V. Woolf, *The Letters of Virginia Woolf*: 3, 5 December 1927.

14 V. Woolf, *Diary*: 2, 216.

15 V. Sackville-West, *Knole and the Sackvilles*, 15-6.

Such interest as the Sackvilles have lies, I think, in their being so representative. From generation to generation they might stand, fully-equipped, as portraits from English history. Unless they are to be considered in this light they lose their purport; they merely share, as Byron wrote to one of their number :

[...] with titled crowds the common lot,/ In life just gazed at, in the grave forgot [...]

But let them stand each as the prototype of his age, and at the same time as a link to carry on, not only the tradition but also the heredity of his race, and they immediately acquire a significance, a unity. You have first the grave Elizabethan, with the long, rather melancholy face, emerging from the oval frame above the black clothes and the white wand of office; you perceive all his severe integrity; you understand the intimidating austerity of the contribution he made to English letters. Undoubtedly a fine old man. You come down to his grandson: he is the Cavalier by Van Dyck hanging in the hall, hand on hip, his flame-coloured doublet slashed across by the blue of the Garter; this is the man who raised a troop of horse off his own estates and vowed never to cross the threshold of his house into an England governed by the murderers of the King.<sup>16</sup>

10. Sackville-West could not have been clearer: her family stands for the whole of the aristocracy, and the power of the aristocracy is legitimated through a very specific relation between words and images. The Sackville portraits work as conduits for the history of the nation as a whole, and in its turn that history becomes readable, and takes on flesh, as it were, in their portraits. The translation of those images into Sackville-West's words drives along well-established lines: black and white stand for moral rigour and austere expression; primary colours signify equally primary virtues — courage and loyalty — which then find their expression in actions such as raising a troop of horses, and refusing to leave Knoles. Sackville-West's understanding of her family's contribution and role in the making of English history is structured by what Rancière has called the "representative logic" of the mimetic regime, which reads "into the expression of faces and the attitude of bodies the thoughts and feelings that inspired characters and determined their actions".<sup>17</sup> But Sackville-West goes further than this, and claims that this representative logic also means that the history of the Sackvilles stands for the history of England, to which they are therefore the rightful heirs. In this extension of the principle of representation, the family comes to stand for the country, in a "figural displacement" which for Rancière defines the other pole of the mimetic regime.

11. This claim to representation — political and artistic, political *because* artistic — was tested in Woolf's choice of the frontispiece for *Orlando*. The portrait she makes impersonate Orlando as a boy is derived from a painting by Cornelius Nuie depicting the two sons of the van Dyck's royalist. Sackville-West tells us that both sons were kidnapped by the Roundheads, and the youngest, Edward, murdered. Woolf chooses the murdered younger son to stand in for Orlando, in a figural displacement that mutilates the portrait: the original showed the two boys dressed identically and in near-identical poses, almost as if they were in fact reflections in a mir-

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-9.

<sup>17</sup> J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 121.

ror. Woolf's cut interferes with the specularity and redirects it towards the biographical subject, Vita, inviting an identification that Sackville-West acknowledged immediately on reading the novel. The identification works as a fantasy of restoration, or a Restoration fantasy which explains the double displacement of the Civil War in *Orlando*: it is shifted abroad to exotic Constantinople (it breaks out just at the symbolic moment when Orlando is receiving his Dukedom), and semantically replaced by the revelation of Orlando's sex-change. The link between the portrait and the historical action Sackville-West reads in it — the crimes of the revolutionaries — is thus not so much broken as deflected: the portrait is made to signify not the Civil War but the indeterminate character of Orlando's sexual identity. This does not mean that the portrait loses its representative character, but rather that what it represents or exemplifies is no longer just the continuity of aristocratic rule in English history — that is, Vita's identification as a Sackville — but the fundamental indeterminacy of sexual identity across time — Orlando's identification with Vita.

12. *Orlando's* images are then not just parodies of Sackville-West's claim to representativeness, as it is often argued; they are images in which that claim coexists with another one, producing that particular tension between different regimes of expression Rancière has identified in the pensive image. It is this tension that constructs the fictional space in which Orlando's life can unfold. The images came first in the process of writing: Woolf was driving with Vita to Knole, or writing to her about the selection of portraits and her sessions with the photographers in the very early stages of composition of the book.<sup>18</sup> Selecting the images bonded Woolf and Sackville-West together in the making of it; it also constructed that common space in which Orlando's adventures would become possible. This is the chief function of the image for Rancière: to form what he calls "a common sense", in which a community is founded on a shared understanding of the relation between words and things, "a spatiotemporal system in which words and visible forms are assembled into shared data, shared ways of perceiving, being affected and imparting meaning".<sup>19</sup> Woolf's avowed aim in writing *Orlando* was precisely to give that community a body: "One of these days, though, I shall sketch here, like a grand historical picture, the outlines of all my friends. [...] Vita should be Orlando, a young nobleman. There should be Lytton. & it should be truthful; but fantastic. Roger. Duncan. Clive. Adrian. Their lives should be related".<sup>20</sup> Though the *dramatis personae* were considerably reduced in the event, traces of this commonality persist throughout *Orlando's* images, which were shot by a number of family members, and refer, directly or indirectly, either to a familial lineage (Cameron) or to Bloomsbury members. The Gheeraerts portrait of Mary Curzon, wife of the van Dyck Cavalier and mother of the murdered boy, gestures not just towards Lytton Strachey but also Roger Fry, who had lectured on Flemish art at the Royal Academy in January

18 See V. Woolf, *Orlando: The Original Holograph Draft*, 35-6.

19 J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 102.

20 V. Woolf, *Diary*: 3, 157.

1927, and to Harold Nicolson's *Some People*, reviewed by Woolf in the same year. Encrypted in the portrait of this marginal character is the collective enterprise of refashioning biography in which Woolf and her friends all seemed to be engaged.

13. There are then two commonalities or common senses, two different ways of understanding the relation between word and image confronting each other within *Orlando*. There is the one that we may ascribe to Woolf, in which images are repositories of rich associations and multiple layers, of jokes and double-entendres. In this kind of common sense what is shared is in fact not immediately visible, but must be ferreted out and unravelled. But for this commonality of the few to be able to operate, there must also be at work the other way of understanding the image, Sackville-West's. Orlando's biographer is the figure of this rather dim viewer within the text. His pedestrian way of reading images issues clear guidance on how to look and not see: he opens the book with a clear recognition of the instability of Orlando's sexual identity, only to deny the evidence of his eyes. He draws attention to the difference clothing makes in the portraits of Orlando as a man and as a woman, only to then re-assert that it is sexual identity that determines that difference.<sup>21</sup> His subject fares no better, pouring his melancholia out in the "pedestrian measure [that] gravely plods", the blank verse that for Woolf "has proved itself the most remorseless enemy of living speech [...] the reader's mind stiffens and glazes under the monotony of the rhythm".<sup>22</sup> Vacuous verse dwells in hollow minds: like "donkey West", Orlando is indeed pretty blank, or *a blank* — "No attempt is to be made to realise the character",<sup>23</sup> Woolf had programmatically noted.

14. But are these two ways of reading images, the two groupings of those in the know and the unthinking "English unaesthetic eye"<sup>24</sup> really so different? In a 1919 review of the Royal Academy show (the first after the war), Woolf had given a definition of the art of reading pictures that shared much with that practised by Sackville-West:

The point of a good Academy picture is that you can search the canvas for ten minutes or so and still be doubtful whether you have extracted the whole meaning. There is, for example, no. 248, *Cocaine*. A young man in evening dress lies, drugged, with his head upon the pink satin of a woman's knee. The ornamental clock assures us that it is exactly eleven minutes to five. The burning lamp proves that it is dawn. He, then, has come home to find her waiting? She has interrupted his debauch? For my part, I prefer to imagine what in painters' language (a tongue well worth separate study) would be called "a dreary vigil".<sup>25</sup>

15. The whole point of the Academy picture is in fact that the ambiguity cannot be left to stand for long. Woolf the common viewer immediately proceeds to give her readers a translation of the "dreary vigil" into a story of marital disappointment: the woman has been waiting for her husband

21 V. Woolf, *Orlando*, 171.

22 V. Woolf, "Aurora Leigh", *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, 526.

23 V. Woolf, *Diary*: 3, 131.

24 V. Woolf, "The Cinema", *Essays*: 4, 348

25 V. Woolf, "The Royal Academy", *Essays*: 3, 91

alone since eight-thirty, alternatively looking at a photograph of the man she should have married and of their son who died in infancy. *Cocaine* is a late example of what Pamela Fletcher has identified as “problem pictures [...] deliberately ambiguous scenes of modern life, designed to invite multiple, equally plausible interpretations”. By 1919 the problem picture was already perceived to be rather old-fashioned, as Woolf’s tone signals; even before the war it was already felt that “those who seek their pictures and problems at the cinematograph entertainments may not be altogether satisfied with the fare provided by the Academy”.<sup>26</sup> Woolf’s famous rejection of narrative cinema in the only essay she ever wrote on the new art form is clearly coloured by her awareness of this tradition, and of how easily cinema — especially mute cinema — could lend itself to such a reading: “the most famous novels of the world” become transcribed “in words of one syllable written in the scrawl of an illiterate schoolboy. A kiss is love. A smashed chair is jealousy. A grin is happiness. Death is a hearse”.<sup>27</sup> Even as late as 1940 Woolf will continue to equate “a photographic mind” with that of “a Royal Academician”, “bright as paint, but how obvious, how little [...] beneath the skin”.<sup>28</sup>

16. In *Orlando* this mode of viewing undergoes a surprising elevation and comes to define the commonality of sophisticated viewers “in the know”, who can unravel the significance of the book’s illustrations. This elevation is predicated on the existence of that other commonality, that of the stupid viewer, inclined both to take images at face-value and to ascribe to them an excess of symbolic meaning, as Sackville-West did with her family portraits. But the distinction between these two ways of thinking about images can never be located in a text that is told by two narrators at once, or in the images that make visible a fictional character: we cannot see Orlando without seeing Vita too, nor can we see Vita without seeing the Sackville features, the continuation of the family line. The indeterminacy of the images is then also an indeterminacy of the relation between the commonality of the “stupid” viewer and that of the viewer in the know. There is a sense in which this appears to be an emancipatory move: no more annoying French ladies flitting about the place, no more of that threat of annihilation Jacob dimly perceived. But this emancipated viewer has in fact very little space to think her own thoughts; it is very difficult to gain a critical foothold on *Orlando* (Woolf was probably its harshest judge) precisely because the text annuls the distinction between thoughtful and thoughtless viewer. We can certainly see in this collapse Woolf’s critique of what is often called Bloomsbury formalism, an entirely different kind of painter’s tongue, in which viewers inhabit a “silent land [...] are seeing things we cannot see [...] making passes with their hands, to express what they cannot say”.<sup>29</sup> Bloomsbury images are paradigmatically modern, “no longer the codified expression of a thought or feeling” that Sackville-West

26 P. Fletcher, *Narrating Modernity: the British Problem Picture*, 136.

27 V. Woolf, “The Cinema”, *Essays*: 4, 350.

28 V. Woolf, *Letters*: 6, 382.

29 V. Woolf, “Walter Sickert”, *Essays*: 6, 39.

still cherished in her family portraits, but “a way in which things themselves speak and are silent”.<sup>30</sup> Against these silent images, *Orlando* is a determinedly chatty text, the embodiment of “literary excess, the excess of what words project over what they refer to”.<sup>31</sup>

17. This literary excess is the result of the ways in which the thoughtless image functions in Woolf. As a stumbling block, the thoughtless image arrests her thinking, or rather the thinking that takes place in her writing, if by thinking we understand the dissolution of objects into sensations and sense impressions, as Rancière has suggested in his reading of *Madame Bovary* (another woman without a proper name).<sup>32</sup> It is a block that Woolf puts to creative use both in *Jacob's Room* and in *Orlando*, though with very different effects. In *Jacob's Room* the thoughtless image becomes a question that photography, the image of the multitude of images, asks of literature — who is entitled to speak? In *Orlando* that question is ejected or expelled from within the space of enunciation and turned into an issue of the relationship of one art — literature — to the other figurative ones — painting and photography, their difference elided under the heading of representation. The question then becomes “what is there to see?”, a question which both titillates the spectator's curiosity and at the same time frustrates it. In Woolf at least the pensive image turns into a flirting image, or the image of the writer as flirt.

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30 J. Rancière, *The Future of the Image*, 13.

31 J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 124.

32 J. Rancière, *The Politics of Literature*.

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**ILLUSTRATIONS**

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1. SIR PETER LELY — *Louise de Kérouaille*, 1671, Oil on canvas, 125,10 x 101,60 cm

© The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Title : 'Balaustion'  
Sitter : Annie Chinery Cameron  
Reference : E105

2. JULIA MARGARET CAMERON — *Balaustion*, 1871

Dimbola, Museum and Gallery, Isle of Wight

(courtesy of the Julia Margaret Cameron Trust)

