Truth(s), Vision(s), Representation(s): narrative strategies pertaining to the perception of reality and its conveyance in the fictional worlds created by Modernist writers of the Bloomsbury Group.

The study will deal with relevant issues pertaining to the concept of truth applied to modernist fiction. I will examine the concept of truth and its epistemological value in a changing and innovating literary environment. The scope of the research will gauge with the far-ranging relationship between truth and the representation of reality, on the basis of the truth-claims asserted in a fictionalized world. It will focus on the value of truth within the fictional boundaries of Modernist novels produced by the Bloomsbury Group, on the basis of their research on the concept of truth. In particular, I will focus on the activity of the Bloomsbury Group and on its meditation on the idea of truth, of the relationship between truth and narratology and of its relevance for the philosophical investigation; I'll analyze how narrative truth is used as a means to start re-learning and re-shaping mechanisms of the vision and of the perception of the real, outer world.

The literary inward turn of modernism – New aesthetic frontiers

Whereas Woolf’s works have until recently been a privileged object of investigation in gender, race and socio-political studies, fewer attention has been paid to other significant aesthetic aspects of her writings, such as the attempt she made in her novels to establish and systematize a new narrative/aesthetic theory on the conception of reality and the new ways to achieve truth in a text. Her acute awareness of a shift, of a watershed dividing the late 19th century generation of writers from that of the first decades of the 20th century highlights not only Woolf’s obvious awareness of being part of a literary movement in constant dialogue with the reality and the changing environment around it, but also the problem that literature has to face in this particular historical moment, i.e. giving an answer to various issues pertaining the interpretation of the shift in reality and its representation. Subsequently, I’ll condense my attention on the argumentation that the whole compositional construction of the technique of the stream of consciousness can be seen as a form of representation of truth, based on psychological verisimilitudes, which are able to render a real and more truthful image of the surrounding fluid reality.

Truth in the novel has thus to be the result of a negotiation between the inner and the outer narrated worlds: it is indeed a give-and-take between the fictional framework and the values/concepts/ideas we attribute to reality, i.e. a negotiation of the different forms of worldmaking.

And as a matter of fact, to a new worldview corresponds a new worldmaking structure: which is the modernist way of worldmaking? Which narrative strategies does it use? The realist novel in the Victorian and Edwardian sense has declined. Woolf acts as a reformer and interprets the young, modern novels as a reformer; she doesn’t believe anymore and perhaps she can’t believe anymore in “characters” as the Victorians had painted them: it is time to reveal a new “fabric of things”, to look at the inner dimension of the subject, and to its interior life and to stress the subjectivity of this observation.

It is a purpose of this project to analyze which formal devices and which narrative strategies have been proved useful and effective to achieve these aims and to narrate a radical change.

Lytton Strachey’s search and vision of truth in the biographical narration

Following this pattern, it shall be interesting to analyze a further form of narration of reality and truth: biography. Virginia Woolf maintains that in the book Eminent Victorians the “effort of writing against the grain and current of the times is visible too”. Strachey re-created four Victorian characters, he divested them of their aura of perfection, showing who they really were. Through his attempt to modernize a typical literary genre of the Victorian age, he is possibly trying to reflect on the fact that it

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1 For an investigation of the aspects in Woolf’s essays cf. Nünning, Vera, Die Ästhetik Virginia Woolfs: eine Rekonstruktion ihrer philosophischen und ästhetischen Grundanschauungen auf der Basis ihrer nichtfiktionalen Schriften, 1990)
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
is not possible to conceive truth and reality as a staid entity, one being the propositional reflection of the other, but that truth itself is likely to reach us in fragmentary, protean and chaotic condition.

**Points in common (if there are any)**

A common problem of fiction and biography in modernist times is the fact that their boundaries might have blurred. As the former may lack the "reality of truth"\(^4\), so the latter may have too much of the "artistry of fiction"\(^5\). Woolf added the subtitle "A Biography" to her masterpiece *Orlando*. For which reasons? As is often highlighted, Virginia Woolf's views on biography are directly related with her views on fiction\(^6\). In this project I may argue that modernist writers, such as both Woolf and Strachey conceived biography from a completely altered point of view. In fact, they sought to depict personality and subjectivity by means of pursuing the truth of the character without distorting and hampering it and without following the idea of goodness\(^7\) at any cost, as in the Victorian epoch.

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\(^4\) See V.W. "The New Biography" (E4)
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) One of the key strands of argument in *Principia Ethica* by G.E. Moore is indeed that "intrinsic good is an unanalysable concept" and that "the word 'good' is indefinable". This approach may probably lay at the basis of Woolf and Strachey's position.