



DOCUMENTALISM AS A LITERARY METHOD: REALITY, MEMORY, AND NARRATIVE INTERPRETATION

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ABSTRACT

This article examines documentalism as a literary method based on factual material and narrative interpretation. It argues that documentalism integrates memory, testimony, and ethical authorship to expand the boundaries of contemporary literature.

Documentalism has become one of the most significant tendencies in modern literature, reflecting a growing interest in factual authenticity, historical truth, and personal testimony. In contemporary literary studies, documentalism is increasingly interpreted not merely as a genre form, but as a complex literary method that reorganizes the relationship between reality and artistic representation. This approach allows literature to engage directly with real events while preserving its interpretative and aesthetic functions.

At the core of documentalism lies the use of documentary material — archival documents, memoirs, diaries, interviews, eyewitness accounts, and historical records. Unlike fictional narration, documentary texts are grounded in verifiable facts; however, their inclusion in literature does not result in a simple reproduction of reality. Documentary material acquires artistic meaning through narrative selection, structural organization, and authorial interpretation. Thus, documentalism operates as a mediated form of reality, shaped by the author's perspective and ethical position.

One of the defining characteristics of documentalism is its orientation toward truth and authenticity. Yet truth in documentary literature is not limited to factual accuracy. It also encompasses emotional truth, moral responsibility, and the representation of lived experience. Documentary writing often emerges in response to historical trauma, political repression, war, social injustice, or collective crisis. In such contexts, factual narration becomes a way of restoring historical memory and counteracting silence or distortion.

The category of memory plays a central role in documentary literature. Personal and collective memory function as organizing principles of the narrative, connecting individual experience with broader historical processes. Autobiographical and testimonial forms allow authors to construct alternative historical narratives that differ from official versions of

events. Through memory, documentalism transforms private experience into shared cultural knowledge, emphasizing the importance of subjective perspective in understanding history.

Another important aspect of documentalism is the ethical dimension of authorship. The documentary writer assumes responsibility not only for aesthetic form but also for the representation of real people and real events. This ethical stance distinguishes documentary literature from fictional narration, as it requires respect for the authenticity of testimony and awareness of the consequences of representation. The author in documentalism often occupies the position of witness, mediator, or interpreter rather than an omniscient narrator.

In contemporary literature, documentalism demonstrates a tendency toward hybridization. Documentary texts frequently combine elements of fiction, essay writing, journalism, and oral history. This genre hybridity reflects the complexity of modern reality and challenges the rigid opposition between fact and fiction. As a result, documentalism expands the boundaries of literature, allowing it to incorporate new narrative strategies and forms of expression.

Furthermore, documentalism functions as a means of rethinking literary language itself. The documentary text prioritizes clarity, precision, and referential transparency, yet it also employs narrative devices such as montage, fragmentation, and polyphony. These techniques enable the author to present multiple voices and perspectives, reinforcing the dialogic nature of documentary narration.

In comparative literary studies, documentalism provides a productive framework for analyzing how different national literatures respond to shared historical challenges. Despite cultural and linguistic differences, documentary texts often reveal similar narrative strategies aimed at preserving memory and articulating truth. This universality underscores the significance of documentalism as a transnational literary phenomenon.

In conclusion, documentalism should be understood as a specific mode of artistic thinking that integrates factual material with narrative interpretation. It does not negate fiction but reconfigures it within the boundaries of reality and truth. By transforming documentary evidence into a literary tool, documentalism enables literature to fulfill both its aesthetic and ethical functions. As a result, documentalism occupies a central position in contemporary literary discourse, offering new ways of representing reality, memory, and human experience.

An important aspect of documentalism is its impact on the contemporary understanding of authorship and narrative authority. Unlike traditional fictional narration, documentary writing challenges the position of the author as a creator of imaginary worlds and redefines them as a mediator between reality and text. The author's voice in documentalism is often restrained, reflective, and ethically engaged, aiming not to dominate the narrative but to preserve the authenticity of voices and events represented. This transformation of authorial function reinforces the communicative and moral dimension of documentary literature, positioning it as a space of dialogue between individual experience and collective history.

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