

A Critical Appraisal of Narrative in Sport History: Reading the Surf Lifesaving Debate

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All debates in history—who started the Cold War, how successful were the Chartists in achieving their aims, to what extent was the recession of the American frontier culturally significant in American history—are debates between competing narrative interpretations. Moreover, because the historical imagination itself exists intertextually within our own social and political environment, the past is never discovered set aside from everyday life. History is designed and composed in the here and now.¹

HOW DO WE RESOLVE HISTORICAL debates and disputes? In the case of surf lifesaving we have two experts, according to the criteria used to establish academic standards, who have published their views in a number of refereed journal articles and books. Collectively they have published books on beach cultures and their works have appeared in the premier Australasian historical journals, *Australian Historical Studies*, *New Zealand Journal of History* and *Journal of Australian Studies*, and leading international sport and culture journals including *The International Journal of the History of Sport and Culture*, *Sport*,

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Society.² In addition, both authors are "insiders" to beach cultures with Ed Jaggard being a surf lifesaver for many years in Western Australia and Doug Booth surfing from his childhood on Australian, South African and New Zealand beaches.

Given their knowledge bases, their research efforts and their lived experiences, it is not my intention to critique their work specifically from an empirical perspective. The tack I will adopt is not to take the traditional path by questioning their historical production in relation to the contextualized evidence but to look at the literary construction of their historical narratives. In order to evaluate the authors' historical narratives, I have utilized the entire body of their writing on surf lifesaving and beach cultures. Readers are somewhat disadvantaged by this approach, as I have accessed all of the authors' published works, not just the two papers included in the debate. In my opinion, this is the only way to satisfactorily evaluate the literary dimensions of Jaggard's and Booth's work. The intentions of this paper and my evaluation of the surf lifesaving debate are to provide a forum to investigate the role of narrative in historical construction.

Narrative Revival

In the Anglo-American world the narrativist revival of history had its origins in the 1960s. In his *Philosophy and Historical Understanding*, W. B. Gallie was surprised little attention had been paid to the narrative quality of history while in *Analytical Philosophy of History* Arthur Danto argued that history was essentially a narrative exercise.³ Following their lead and the structuralist and poststructuralist critique that emanated from Europe, philosophers of history addressed the relationship of narrative to history. Attention focused on deciding whether only some histories are narratives, whether all histories must contain some narrative dimensions or whether all histories are essentially narratives.⁴ As a consequence of this intellectual debate, there are clearly demarcated positions regarding narrative and history.

Two camps have emerged. The first camp is the anti-narrativists who argue that not all histories are narratives and therefore that non-narrative histories are possible. The influential French historical movement, the "*Annales* School," which emphasizes the structural dimensions of history represents an anti-narrativist position. The "*Annales* School" rejected narrative history and disparaged its focus on events, intentions and individual characters as the surface of "the ocean of history, significant only for what they might reveal of the deeper currents."⁵ The "deeper currents" according to the *Annales* School were the structures that governed social life and were best represented in non-narrative form. The second camp consists of the pro-narrativists who contend that narrative is the unquestioned form of history. In the latter camp there are several different and competing shades of narrativists with the key dividing issue revolving around the correspondence between the past as lived and history as written through narrative form.⁶ There are narrativists such as Lawrence Stone, responsible for igniting much of the debate about historical narratives, who argue there is a strong correspondence between the past and history.⁷ Finally, there are the deconstructive narrativists, such as Hayden White, who contend that narratives are essential but largely misunderstood. Narrative is essential because it is *the* form of history and misunderstood because it does *not* guarantee correspondence between the past and what historians make of that past.⁸ As may be detected in this synopsis, the relationship

between narrative and history has been hotly contested terrain for philosophers and practitioners of history.⁹

Given the vigor of the debate about narrative and history, how much engagement has there been in the subdiscipline of sport history? As far as I am aware, only two sport historians, Nancy Struna and Roberta Park, have analyzed narrative in any depth.¹⁰ Struna describes her position in the mid 1980s: "The relatively short life of sport history as a recognizable academic field of inquiry has produced three distinctive historiographical types: description, narration and analysis."¹¹ Description addresses the basic "who" and "what" questions in a one-dimensional fashion, narrative expresses the more complex aspects of change over time, and analysis examines the challenging issues of the "how" and "why" of sport.¹² There are elements of *the Annales* School's approach in Struna's position, as she gives the impression that analysis not narrative, deals with the "deeper currents of history."¹³ In her more recent synopsis, Struna contends in a very similar way to Park that "the basic types of history, narratives and analyses, both involve description and analysis, although in varying degrees."¹⁴ The position as articulated by Struna and Park is less hierarchical but resonates with the early years of debate in the philosophy of history that viewed narrative as a lesser and optional form of history.¹⁵

Beyond Park's and Struna's commendable efforts, the silence about narrative and history has been deafening. Even Struna in her recent synopsis of the field in the *Handbook of Sports Studies* does not provide any analysis of narrative in sport history.¹⁶ Does this limited engagement by sport historians about history and narrative mean that they don't acknowledge or recognize the aesthetic or literary choices they make? Does this mean that sport historians see the literary dimension of their work as not being their first consideration? Does this mean that epistemological concerns are buried under other issues like the social, cultural or political?¹⁷ My view is that sport historians have positions on all these questions but have decided, consciously or subconsciously, not to articulate them. One intention of this paper is to stimulate the kind of debate in sport history that has become increasingly important to philosophers of history and to practising historians in other fields.

Hayden White and Narrative

To evaluate the surf lifesaving debate I have adopted a pro-narrativist position by working on the principle that narrative is intrinsic to history, not an optional extra, not a lesser form of historical production. Hayden White was chosen, as opposed to other alternatives from F. R. Ankersmit, E. H. Carr, Hans Kellner, Keith Jenkins, Dominick LaCapra, Louis Mink and Paul Ricoeur, to compare Booth and Jaggard for a number of reasons. Firstly, he has been credited as initiating the "linguistic," "cultural," "rhetorical," and "postmodern" turn in history with his famous book, *Metahistory*. As Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt argue: "White can be considered 'the patron saint' of the cultural turn that was just getting under way."¹⁸ Secondly, White's work draws attention to the role of narrative in history. As I have mentioned, sport historians, with the exception of Park and Struna, have been largely reluctant to evaluate the role of narrative and even fewer have ascribed a centrality to narrative processes. Thirdly, White's work is valuable because it provides a substantive, working model of historical analysis. This model provides a template to com-

pare historical works whereas other philosophical analyses are not as readily applicable to assess narrative structures evident in contrasting histories. As Hans Kellner argues, White's analysis of the deep structures of historical thought is eminently suited to "account for the coexistence of many diverse and incommensurable representations of historical events."¹⁹

Trope	Emplotment	Argument	Ideological Implication
Metaphor	Romantic	Formist	Anarchism
Metonymy	Tragic	Mechanistic	Radicalism
Synecdoche	Comic	Organicist	Conservatism
Irony	Satiric	Contextualist	Liberalism

As Table 1 suggests, there are four parts to White's model of historical explanation. There are three surface tiers—emplotment, argument and ideological implication—and the deep structure of tropes. Tropes are the most confronting section of White's model. Tropic figurations, which had been previously used in cultural anthropology and literature, were adapted by White and applied to historical interpretations. He argues there are four tropes—metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche and irony—which are embedded in human consciousness and prefigure the work of historians. In this way, tropes precede the historical narrative; they set up the historical field. As White articulates, tropes act as "paradigms, provided by language itself, of the operations by which consciousness can prefigure areas of experience that are cognitively problematic in order subsequently to submit them to analysis and explanation."²¹ Tropes are not merely stylistic embellishments; rather, they are fundamental to all historical endeavors and, as such, comprise the metahistorical dimension of the model.

The tropic dimension of White's model has been criticized on a number of fronts.²² Keith Windschuttle contends that tropes are not the deep processes of the whole of historical works but rather "relatively minor stylistic devices used *within* historical accounts." White, according to Windschuttle, "has mistaken the surface for the substance, the decoration for the edifice."²³ Other critics have asked the pertinent question: What precedes the troping process? If tropes describe the conditions of possibility of historical writing, they do not explain the choice of any historical consciousness. As Hugh Rayment-Pickard argues: "White's analysis of tropes begs the obvious question of a still deeper level of structure, which prefigures the disposition to a given trope."²⁴ The deeper level may reside in the areas of psychology or biography. Another limitation of White's analysis of historical explanation is the order of presentation of the model. Jenkins, who is very supportive of White's model of historical representation, contends that the ideological mode predetermines the trope of the historian, not the other way around as White argues.²⁵

The other three-part components of White's tropic model are the surface tiers of explanation by emplotment, argument and ideology. White describes explanation by emplotment as "the way by which a sequence of events fashioned into a story is gradually revealed to be a story of a particular kind."²⁶ Drawing on Northrop Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism*, White contends there are four kinds of emplotment in historical works—ro-

mance, tragedy, comedy and satire—all of which have wide credibility in Western literary traditions. The critical dimension to White's explanation by emplotment is that the plot is not inherent in the past but imposed by historians as they make their judgments on the nature of the sequence of events. No historical circumstances are therefore inherently romantic, tragic, comical or satirical.²⁷ Not surprisingly, many historians, particularly those of the Holocaust, have challenged this position.²⁸ As White's critics have legitimately asked: Is it possible to emplot the Holocaust as a comedy?²⁹

In addition to the emplotment of the narrative, historians provide explanations by formal arguments that take four main forms: formist, organicist, mechanistic and contextualist. As White argues, historians seek to explicate "'the point of it all' or what it all adds up to' in the end."³⁰ The type of argument operates on a spectrum of dispersion or integration by relating events, people and action. In this way, historians appeal to commonly accepted views of historical change and human behavior.³¹

The final dimension of White's model is explanation by ideology. Ideology, for White, does not align with party political affiliation but rather represents the moral implication of the historian's selection of argument and emplotment. The four ideological positions, drawn from the German philosopher Karl Mannheim, are anarchism, radicalism, conservatism and liberalism.³² Each of these positions is differentiated according to the historian's views on social change, the rate of change, time orientations and the temporal qualities of the utopian ideal.³³ What is confronting about this last component of White's model is that, if he is right, there is an inescapable ideological dimension to every historical account of the past. Historians cannot avoid projecting their ideological views about the present and the future back into the past. As Munslow summarizes, "White acknowledges the presentism of history and its construction as a contemporary cultural discourse."³⁴

As previously stated, every component of White's model has been criticized, and collectively his views on narrative have challenged many aspects of traditional historical practice. As Windschuttle states: "What starts out as an exercise in framing history within literary categories, ends up as a redefinition of both the scope and nature of the discipline itself."³⁵ White's ideas taken in tandem with the critiques of Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault undermine the historical practice of assessing "the past as it actually was."³⁶ Barthes, Foucault and White, amongst many others, have seriously criticized history as an empirical project that is written by an unbiased, ideologically neutral, non-impositionalist, and objective historian. Not surprisingly, these challenges to the epistemological status of history have met with some eloquent, measured and thoughtful responses by historians.³⁷ My intention, therefore, is not to engage in a prolonged polemic about whether White has entirely discredited traditional historical practices but to use his model, acknowledging its problematic components, to compare and contrast the narratives constructed by the lifesaving historians. What I am taking from White's work is his assessment of history as an act of literary creation to evaluate the dispute between Booth and Jaggard.

The Literary Construction of the Surf Lifesaving Debate

In comparing Booth and Jaggard on the first dimension of White's model, the troping process or the deep prefigurative aspects of narrative, there are major differences.³⁸ Booth prefigures his understanding of surf lifesaving by integrating all components of the cul-

tures of the beach. Surf lifesaving is understood in terms of its relationship to the social construction of the body, the surf, surf bathing and surfing. In this way, Booth employs a synecdochic trope where the emphasis is integrative, rather than reductive, and all dimensions of beach cultures are understood through the social and political struggles that have defined their existence.³⁹ For example, Booth juxtaposes surf lifesavers and surfers:

One of the clearest statements of cultural diversity on the Australian beach appeared in the respective styles and behaviors adopted by surfers and lifesavers in the early 1960s. While surf lifesavers at that stage still bore many of the characteristics of pre-Second World War Australia—masculinity, mastshep, an "emphasis on physical prowess, keg parties and grog-ups . . . uncertainty of relationships with women [and] a certain homespun philosophy of life"—surfers were devotees of a cult that viewed riding boards as a stylised form of art. They "danced at local surf club stomps, wore bleached hair or (among the girls) long beat styles, approved of bare feet and affected a summer casualness in dress." Certainly the two groups considered the differences blatant and profound.⁴⁰

This example is indicative of how Booth seeks to make sense of surf lifesaving not so much in terms of its parts, although this is where the debate with Jaggard is contested, but through its relationship to components of Australian beach culture. The use of a synecdochic trope is equally evident in the way Booth employs the social construction of the body as a conceptual tool to explain surf lifesaving: "As signs, sets of social practices and bearers of power, bodies tell us much about different cultures. Nowhere is this truer than on the Australian beach, where the dominant cultures—surf and sunbathers, surfers and surf lifesavers—make their bodies highly visible."⁴¹ Bodies provide a platform to compare, contrast and integrate surf lifesavers with other subcultures on Australian beaches.

Jaggard, like Booth, describes beach cultures in similar ways. He divides the beach into three constituent groups: the general public, surf lifesavers, and surf and boogie board riders. Where Jaggard differs from Booth is that the integration of these three dimensions of beach cultures does not drive his analysis. Rather Jaggard's approach is metonymic: he dissects surf lifesaving into its component parts—women, "boaties," surfers and officials. Metonymy works, as White suggests, by reducing the whole (surf lifesaving) to a series of parts (women, "boaties," surfers and officials). These parts are given priority in the analysis and provide the central way of understanding the whole.⁴² In this way, Jaggard challenges the "orthodox view of surf lifesaving" by detailing its component parts, in particular, the role of surfing and the participation of women in surf lifesaving.⁴³ These parts are used to show that surf lifesaving was not monolithic, or highly disciplined, or the antithesis of surfer individualism, as other historians have contended,⁴⁴ and that the forms of masculinity entrenched in surf lifesaving created spaces for female participation which have not previously been recognized.⁴⁵ As these examples illustrate Booth and Jaggard pre-figure, shape and underwrite their histories from different tropic positions that result in contrasting ways of representing the past.

The discernable differences in the tropic mode of Booth's and Jaggard's accounts of surf lifesaving are reflected in the three surface dimensions—emplotment, argument and ideological implication—of White's model. With respect to emplotment, Booth's account of surf lifesaving is written as a tragedy. History unfolds for Booth with the subject, most

notably women trying to gain access to the institution of surf lifesaving, suffering for many years as captives of their circumstances. Booth provides numerous examples of the ways in which aspiring female surf lifesavers were abused, denigrated and discriminated against. He selects one poignant reaction to the admission of women from the published history of the Palm Beach Surf Lifesaving Club:

the defeated men proceeded to lower the flag to half mast, dubbed the day "Black Sunday" and retired to the water tower to drown their sorrows, resolving to make life hell for any female who dared to try to join. They would keep their pledge.⁴⁶

Booth acknowledges that women have gained access to the institution of surf lifesaving, yet the story line runs something like this: women were admitted as full members but . . . ; women gained administrative positions but . . . ; and discrimination has been tempered but.... Booth amplifies the pain, the suffering and the agony of the women who have entered the masculine domain of surf lifesaving, and while these women have been granted access to the institution as participating members and in administrative positions, they have not been fully reconciled with their fellow male counterparts nor does it seem likely that they will be. Tragedy prevails in Booth's history.

Jaggard's emplotment is radically different to Booth's tragedy. The history of women's involvement in surf lifesaving in Jaggard's account has a romantic plot. The story of female surf lifesavers is a two-fold struggle with triumphant resolutions. On one level, it is a struggle against the historians who have written women out of the sport:

. . . despite attempts to obscure the realities, women were active if not full members of clubs, continuously in Western Australia, intermittently elsewhere. Many joined for the sporting opportunities provided by surf competition, in the process frequently demonstrating skills equal or superior to more than a few male life-savers.⁴⁷

He concludes: "These 'forgotten members,' whose struggles and achievements have been overlooked, deserve their rightful place in the history of Australia's best known voluntary organization."⁴⁸ On another level, Jaggard seeks to redeem female surf lifesavers by pointing to their plight over the last ninety years. Even though women faced barriers, discrimination and abuse, they persisted with dogged determination to be involved in a range of activities and, following their admittance by the national body, to be accepted in surf lifesaving. Jaggard commends their persistence: ". . . they remained loyal to a movement that continuously discriminated against them on the most spurious of grounds."⁴⁹ Jaggard's heroes are the female surf lifesavers who were written out of historical accounts and who have stuck by the institution that worked against their interests.

In summary, Jaggard emplots his history as a romance, while Booth adopts a tragic emplotment. Both historians acknowledge the discrimination that faced women surf lifesavers, but Jaggard argues that women overcame these impediments to be involved in surf lifesaving to a level not recognized by Booth and other historians. Their official inclusion by the national body is seen as averting the membership crisis in the 1980s with women portrayed as the saviors of a faltering institution. As Jaggard contends: "There's a delicious irony in the knowledge that women gave the kiss of life to a national icon."⁵⁰ Women's involvement in surf lifesaving is emplotted as a "drama of the triumph of good over evil, of virtue over vice, of light over darkness."⁵¹ The heroic dimension of Jaggard's work is absent

in Booth's analysis. Women work against the discrimination, but the emphasis is on the pain, the agony and the suffering. Even when the official barriers to membership were removed, the scars remain. In Booth's account there is long-term damage to women by their exclusion from surf lifesaving for so many years: "Nor can the SLSAA claim that the admission of women has obliterated past discrimination. Many women still harbor bitterness associated with thwarted ambitions. . . . Such bitterness never disappears."⁵² To paraphrase White, these are somber reconciliations with a sense of resignation about the conditions under which women have labored and continue to labor in surf lifesaving.⁵³ Booth's tortured souls are Jaggard's heroes.

Booth's and Jaggard's explanations by argument share some similarities but, overall, many more differences. Jaggard predominantly relies on a formist argument by identifying the unique, atomistic and dispersive character of events and people. As Munslow contends, this approach "permits us graphically to represent vivid individual events from which it is possible to make significant generalizations."⁵⁴ The primary examples highlighted by Jaggard are the involvement of women in surf lifesaving and the role of the president of the Surf Lifesaving Association of Australia, Adrian Curlewis. Jaggard quantitatively demonstrates the number of members in the North Cottesloe and City of Perth clubs in Western Australia to illustrate the participation of women in active roles in surf lifesaving.⁵⁵ He summarizes: "There is certainly enough evidence to conclude that women were part of surf life-saving, and that they were motivated by a love of the surf and competition, as well as being dedicated to the primary goal of surf lifesaving."⁵⁶ Booth depreciates these examples of female involvement by arguing that they were well away from the Sydney-based National Council and occurred mostly before this regulatory body had consolidated its power.⁵⁷

In a similar style, Adrian Curlewis is used by Jaggard to dispel the notion that the movement was essentially militaristic, authoritarian and conservative. Jaggard reads a photo of Curlewis performing a headstand on a surfboard to make his point:

The foreword and the photograph capture the apparently contradictory attitudes of thousands of other surf lifesavers towards their movement and surfing. Curlewis proudly personified those qualities needed to successfully challenge the surf when saving lives: dedication, self sacrifice, humanitarianism, an adherence to drills and discipline. As with many of his contemporaries, however, there also lurked the free-wheeling, hedonistic surfer searching for the ultimate surfing thrill.⁵⁸

Curlewis is emblematic of a far more complex surf lifesaving culture than Booth and other historians have articulated. In contrast, Booth does not seriously entertain the belief that this photograph can be extrapolated as indicative of the culture of surf lifesaving. He asks: "Was the man who later became a judge and who received a knighthood really a hedonist searching for the ultimate surfing thrill?"⁵⁹ Booth acknowledges Jaggard's contribution in identifying the multiple identities of surf lifesavers, but he is more interested in the context: "[Jaggard] does not acknowledge the strong social pressures exerted on the early movement to suppress hedonism, and he underestimates the regimented institutional structure that shaped lifesaving culture well into the second half of the twentieth century."⁶⁰

Understanding the history of surf lifesaving for Booth resides less in the actions of individuals or singular events than in the periods, eras, trends, concepts and relatively



Adrian Curlewis performing a headstand. COURTESY SEAN BRAWLEY, *BEACH BEYOND* (1996).

discreet movements that provide the context for these actions. Booth's entire analysis of beach cultures, including both surf lifesaving and surfing, is framed by and entwined in the context of social movements or large social forces such as counterculture, soul surfing, the sexual revolution and hedonism. Accordingly surf lifesaving can only be understood once we have grasped the importance of the body to beach cultures through the lenses of Erving Goffman and Pierre Bourdieu, once we recognize the importance of John Loy's concept of agonal patriarchies on how men have related to each other and to women, and only once we have analyzed competitive surf lifesaving through Bryan Turner's managerial athleticism. To a lesser degree, Jaggard provides a contextualist dimension. The debate about women in surf lifesaving was framed by the "appearance of the second wave women's movement, the swing of the political pendulum toward Labor after many years of conservative state and federal governments, and masculinity—one of the most powerful forces in Australian society."⁶¹ Jaggard, as this example illustrates, prefers a contextualist element to history, though it does not drive the majority of formal argument throughout his work on surf lifesaving. Jaggard, in contrast to Booth who prioritizes context, combines both a formist (dominant) and contextualist (residual) argument to frame his history of surf lifesaving.

White's final category, argument by ideological position, also indicates differences between the histories created by Booth and Jaggard. White is concerned with "how ideological considerations enter into the historian's attempts to explain the historical field. . . ."⁶² All histories, White argues, have an ideological component as historians cannot be erased from the histories they write. The key differences in the four forms of ideological implications—anarchism, radicalism, conservatism and liberalism—are evident in the historian's interpretation of the desirability of social change, the pace of that change, time orientations and the temporal location of the utopian ideal.⁶³

Jaggard and Booth reveal their ideological positions most clearly in their analysis of the desirability of social change and the pace of that change. Jaggard certainly recognizes and commends social change in the surf lifesaving movement. He goes to great lengths to detail new awards, the professionalization of administration, rescue methods, changing technologies as well as increases in sponsorship, membership and clubs.⁶⁴ His analysis, however, takes the form of fine-tuning and adjustments to the institution in the context of its component parts without questioning the whole existence of surf lifesaving. Surf lifesaving, for Jaggard, has been a conservative, masculine institution that has undergone major transformations during the 1970s and 1980s but one, nevertheless, that has earned "icon status" and, at times, has represented "the quintessential Australian."⁶⁵ What pervades his history is the belief that surf lifesaving, with all its warts, deserves a place on Australian beaches. Booth, on the other hand, is not as interested in change taking the form of fine-tuning or small adjustments but in the structural transformations that would reconstitute the place of surf lifesaving on the beach.⁶⁶ Booth is far less optimistic about the future of surf lifesaving. For instance in his book, *Australian Beach Cultures*, a section entitled "Lifeguards: The Death of a Culture," Booth examines the contemporary threats to surf lifesaving including the tension over increasing commercialization and the employment of contracted, American style, lifeguards.⁶⁷ The very existence of surf lifesaving is under threat in Booth's history. This position is epitomized in his analysis of the role of surf lifesaving in the closing ceremony of the Sydney Olympic Games (2000): "It was pure pantomime and proof, if ever it was needed, that traditional surf lifesaving culture is dead."⁶⁸

In regard to the pace of social change, Jaggard's interpretation is one marked by explanation that amplifies piecemeal change over decades. With regard to women's involvement, their admittance as full members was certainly a major breakthrough but one that had been building for years as exemplified by their under-represented involvement since the early years of surf lifesaving. A strong theme is the continuities that prevail in Jaggard's history, rather than discontinuities. Jaggard details the transformations in surf lifesaving during the 1970s and 1980s but stresses changes in the context of the continuities. These continuities include the ninety-year tradition of patrolling the beaches and the dual functions of surf lifesaving as a humanitarian and sporting organization. As he concludes: "Despite all these mostly successful efforts to introduce overdue changes, the continuities remained very obvious."⁶⁹ As White's model indicates, the pace of change for Jaggard assumes the social rhythm of the parliamentary debate.⁷⁰

Booth rejects the notion of piecemeal or evolutionary social change or change based on the analogy of the parliamentary debate. His account does not dwell on continuities. The case studies of women's participation in Western Australia and of the president, Adrian Curlewis, are isolated events that were not indicative of social change. Rather Booth, to a greater extent than Jaggard, recognizes the inertial pull of inherited institutions. He stresses the role of the National Council in Sydney and its influence in preventing membership for women and the social pressures within surf lifesaving to various forms of hedonism. In this vein Booth summarizes: "... I maintain that he [Jaggard] underestimates the regimented institutional structure that shaped early lifesaving culture."⁷¹ While Booth's history recognizes the possibility of cataclysmic changes, it is also sensitive to "the inertial pull of inherited institutions."⁷²

In these ways, Jaggard's history favors a liberal ideology whereas Booth's history has radical ideological implications. These differences remind us of White's key and controversial assertion that historians take their own baggage about the present and the future back into the past and then out again in their finished works. In other words, historians work in a "present-centered" mode. An example provided by Jenkins compares the famous historians E. H. Carr and Geoffrey Elton. He asks: "[C]ould you see Geoffrey Elton ever writing an E. H. Carr history or thinking E. H. Carr's thoughts on history *per se*?" These historians, as Jenkins contends, "read the present and the future in terms of ideological differences that transcend arguments about evidence."⁷³ One can ask the same questions of Jaggard and Booth: How is it that two contrasting views of surf lifesaving can appear given the common body of evidence? How do their personal interpretations of the present and the future impact on their versions of the past? Ultimately, it is hard to imagine Jaggard ever writing a Booth type of history and vice versa.

By mapping Jaggard's and Booth's histories according to White's tropic model, different narrative elements become evident. Both historians prefigure their analyses by using competing tropes as well as applying contrasting styles in the three surface tiers of their historical explanations. As has been shown, a metonymic trope, a romantic plot, predominantly a formist argument with a liberal ideology typifies Jaggard's historical explanation. Booth, in contrast, employs a synecdochic trope, a tragic plot, and a contextual argument with a radical ideology.

Table 2: Mapping Jaggard and Booth according to White's Model of Historical Explanation

Historian	Trope	Emplotment	Argument	Ideological Implication
Jaggard	Metonymy	Romantic	Formist (contextualist)	Liberalism
Booth	Synecdoche	Tragic	Contextualist	Radicalism

Jaggard's and Booth's interpretations of surf lifesaving seem to bear out White's model of historical explanation. But they also raise a number of additional issues. Firstly, analysis of the surf lifesaving debate provides an example of how it is possible and productive to assess historical interpretations using criteria similar to those that apply to fictional literature. Secondly, it shows how it is possible to critique the narrative structure used by historians to reveal the deeper interpretations these impose on the writing of history. Thirdly, it demonstrates how historians trope, emplot, argue and insert ideological implication in their work determines the relationship between the evidence and the narrative accounts. Finally, the surf lifesaving debate suggests that the question raised in the introduction—Is history, as White propounds, a narrative discourse which is as much invented/imagined as found?⁷⁴—must be answered in the affirmative.

Conclusion

The surf lifesaving debate provides a forum for critical analysis of narrative in sport history, an issue that has been of little importance in the subdiscipline but a contentious issue in wider debates about history. While White's tropical model has been the tool used to bring narrative into the spotlight, his critics, as suggested previously, raise a variety of problematic issues about his approach. Indeed White had to clarify his position when he was challenged over the Holocaust and whether there were limitations to its representation.⁷⁵ In response to the criticism, White argued that historians do not actually create fiction as they deal with real events and real lives, and that competing narratives "can be assessed, criticized, and ranked on the basis of their fidelity to the factual record, their comprehensiveness, and the coherence of whatever historical arguments they contain."⁷⁶ In this way he attempted to counter fears that his approach to history opened the door to extreme relativism, while still maintaining that historical accounts are a product of the literary imagination. But as two prominent Australian historians, Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath, point out: "One does not have to adopt fully White's particular theory of storytelling . . . to take his key point: that historians, in constructing an historical narrative, are writing narrative."⁷⁷

What White and other narrativists like Ankersmit and Mink so effectively draw our attention to are the literary aspects of history. The focus on literary dimensions effects a major realignment from the scientific principles that Appleby, Hunt and Jacob argue characterized the development of history since the Enlightenment.⁷⁸ By adopting the principles of the scientific model of history with the desire to be objective, to provide verifiable knowledge, to rely on the facts, to be ideologically neutral and to be non-impositionalist, historians have denied the rhetorical enterprise in which they are inescapably engaged.⁷⁹ The Australian scholar, Tom Griffiths, notes the implications of negating the rhetoric in historical production:

[P]erhaps the most disabling phrase or metaphor of all is that what we write is "non-fiction." To call our writing "non-fiction" seems to deny its creative, imaginative dimensions; it's *not* something, and the something it's not is that rather wonderful and captivating world of fiction.... Writing true stories is the product of a fascinating struggle between imagination and evidence.⁸⁰

Acknowledging the literary, rhetorical and poetic aspects of history is a double-edged sword, however: It is both threatening and liberating. Threatening because it undercuts many of the traditional practices of history, yet liberating because it creates a range of options previously considered unsuitable for the profession. As Munslow stresses: "[I]f we approach history as literature we may even write better history, as we deploy an additional range of critical apparatuses to the established rule of contextualized evidence."⁸¹ With this view in mind, the medieval historian Peter Burke, in his second edition of *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, encourages experimentation with different narrative forms. Amongst a range of options, he advocates that historians should attempt to make themselves visible in their narratives "not out of self indulgence but as a warning to the reader that they are not omniscient or impartial and that other interpretations besides theirs are possible."⁸² Burke also recommends narratives written from different voices. Richard Prides history of eighteenth-century Surinam, for example, is a compelling story of slavery con-

structed from the perspectives of the Dutch colonial administrators, Moravian missionaries, black slaves and the historian. Another strategy for historians is to construct narratives with alternate closures in order to encourage interpretation by giving more responsibility to the reader. Micronarrative is another historical form that has been favored in a number of well-regarded histories including Carlo Ginzburg's biography of a sixteenth-century miller and Natalie Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre*.⁸⁵ Burke continues with other examples of linking micro and macro narratives, writing history backwards and narrative projects that are constructed around different historical perspectives on the basis that "a search is under way for new forms of narrative which will be appropriate to the new stories historians would like to tell."⁸⁴

Sport historians too should recognize the critical role of narrative in history, in order to take an advantage of the range of options that open up when the literary qualities of history are appreciated. In this context, the surf lifesaving debate between Jaggard and Booth extends far beyond the specifics of the sport, as their interchanges and my critique both draw attention to the potential value in examining the rhetorical elements evident in the production of sport history:



¹Alun Munslow, *Deconstructing History* (London: Routledge, 1997), 161-162.

²For Booth's papers and presentations relating to the beach, see Douglas Booth, "War off Water: The Surf Life Saving Association and the Beach," *Sporting Traditions* 7 (1991): 135-162; Douglas Booth, "Swimming, Surfing and Surf-Lifesaving," in *Sport in Australia: A Social History*, eds. W. Vamplew and B. Stoddart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 231-254; Douglas Booth, "Surfing '60s: A Case Study in the History of Pleasure and Discipline," *Australian Historical Studies* 26 (1994): 262-279; Douglas Booth, "Nudes on the Beach, and Perverts in the Dunes," *Journal of Australian Studies* 53 (1997): 170-182; Douglas Booth, "Healthy, Economic and Disciplined Bodies: Surfing and Surf Lifesaving in Australia and New Zealand, 1890-1950," *New Zealand Journal of History* 32 (1998): 43-58; Douglas Booth, "Surfing: The Technological and Cultural Determinants of a Dance," *Culture, Sport, Society* 2 (1999): 36-55; Douglas Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures: The History of Sun, Sand and Surf* (London: Frank Cass, 2001); Douglas Booth, "The Dark Side of Surf Life Saving," paper presented at Sporting Traditions XIII, Adelaide, South Australia, July 2001. For Jaggard's papers and presentations pertaining to surf lifesaving see Ed Jaggard, "Chameleons in the Surf," *Journal of Australian Studies* 53 (1997): 183-191; Ed Jaggard, "Australian Surf Life-saving and the 'Forgotten Members,'" *Australian Historical Studies* 30 (1999): 23-43; Ed Jaggard, "Australian Surf Life Saving: Images, Realities and Change," paper presented at Sporting Traditions XIII, Adelaide, South Australia, July 2001; Ed Jaggard, "'Tempering the Testosterone': Women, Masculinity and Surf Lifesaving in Australia," *International Journal of the History of Sport* 18 (2001): 16-36.

³Hugh Rayment-Pickard, "Narrativism," in *Philosophies of History: From Enlightenment to Postmodernity*, eds. Robert M Burns and Hugh Rayment-Pickard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 274.

⁴Richard T. Vann, "Turning Linguistic: History and Theory and *History and Theory*, 1960-1975," in *A New Philosophy of History*, eds. Frank R. Ankersmit and Hans Kellner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 51.

⁵Peter Burke, "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 283.

⁶Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 67-69.

⁷See Lawrence Stone, "The Revival of Narrative," *Past and Present* 85 (1979): 3-24.

⁸Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 67-68.

⁹See Vann, "Turning Linguistic," 40-69.

¹⁰See Nancy L. Struna, "In 'Glorious Disarray': The Literature of American Sport History," *Research Quarterly For Exercise and Sport* 56 (1985): 151-160; Nancy L. Struna, "Sport History," in *The History of Exercise and Sport Science*, eds. J. D. Massengale and R. A. Swanson (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1996), 170; and Roberta J. Park, "Research and Scholarship in the History of Physical Education and Sport: The Current State of Affairs," *Research Quarterly For Exercise and Sport* 54 (1983): 93-103.

¹¹Struna, "In 'Glorious Disarray,'" 151.

¹²Ibid., 151-154.

¹³Burke, "History of Events," 283.

¹⁴Struna, "Sport History," 170; Park, "Research and Scholarship."

¹⁵Vann, "Turning Linguistic," 45.

¹⁶Nancy L. Struna, "Social History and Sport," in *Handbook of Sport Studies*, eds. J. Coakley and E. Dunning (London: Sage, 2000), 187-203.

¹⁷Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 53-54.

¹⁸Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn A. Hunt, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, eds. Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn A. Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2.

¹⁹Hans Kellner, "Introduction: Describing Redescriptions," in *A New Philosophy of History*, 16.

²⁰Hayden V. White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 29.

²¹Ibid., 36.

²²For a detailed general critique, see Hans Kellner, ed., *Metahistory: Six Critiques* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1980). For a specific critique of White's analysis in relation to the Holocaust, see Saul Friedländer, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution"* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992).

²³Keith Windschuttle, *The Killing of History: How a Discipline is Being Murdered by Literary Critics and Social Theorists* (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2000), 268.

²⁴Rayment-Pickard, "Narrativism," 281.

²⁵Keith Jenkins, *On "What is History?": From Carr and Elton to Rorty and White* (London: Routledge, 1995), 175.

²⁶White, *Metahistory*, 7.

²⁷Jenkins, *On "What is History?"* 160-161.

²⁸See Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, for an extensive debate about White's approach to history as it applies to the Holocaust.

²⁹Saul Friedländer, "Introduction," in Friedländer, *Probing the Limits*, 6-11.

³⁰White, *Metahistory*, 11.

³¹Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 158.

³²White, *Metahistory*, 22-29.

³³Jenkins, *On "What is History?"* 164.

³⁴Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 159.

³⁵Windschuttle, *The Killing of History*, 266.

³⁶Critiquing the approach of "the past as it actually was" is the theme in Beverley Southgate, *History, What and Why?: Ancient, Modern, and Postmodern Perspectives* (London: Routledge, 1996).

³⁷For example see Joyce O. Appleby, Lynn A. Hunt and Margaret C. Jacob, *Telling the Truth about History* (New York: Norton, 1994); Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London: Granta, 1997); and C. Behan McCullagh, *The Truth of History* (London: Routledge, 1998).

³⁸White, *Metahistory*, 31-38. Also see Jenkins, *On "What is History?"* 167-173, for a lucid discussion of White's analysis of troping.

³⁹White, *Metahistory*, 35-36.

⁴⁰Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures*, 6.

⁴¹Ibid., 16.

⁴²White, *Metahistory*, 34-35.

⁴³Jaggard, "Chameleons," 184.

⁴⁴Ibid., 184.

⁴⁵This is the theme in Jaggard, "Australian Surf Life-saving" and Jaggard, "'Tempering the Testosterone.'" "

⁴⁶Sean Brawley, *Beach Beyond: A History of the Palm Beach Surf Club 1921-1996* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1996), 204-208 cited in Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures*, 147.

⁴⁷Jaggard, "Australian Surf Life-saving," 43.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Jaggard, "'Tempering,'" 26.

⁵¹White, *Metahistory*, 8.

⁵²Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures*, 149.

⁵³White, *Metahistory*, 9.

⁵⁴Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 158.

⁵⁵Jaggard, "Australian Surf Life-saving," 31-32.

⁵⁶Ibid., 32.

⁵⁷Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures*, 79.

⁵⁸Jaggard, "Chameleons," 185.

⁵⁹Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures*, 90.

⁶⁰Ibid., 88.

⁶¹Jaggard, "'Tempering,'" 3-4.

⁶²White, *Metahistory*, 26.

⁶³Jenkins, *On "What is History?"* 164.

⁶⁴Jaggard, "Australian Surf Life-saving," 7-10.

⁶⁵Ibid., 6.

⁶⁶White, *Metahistory*, 24.

⁶⁷Booth, *Australian Beach Cultures*, 181-184.

⁶⁸Ibid., 184.

⁶⁹Jaggard, "Australian Surf Life-saving," 11.

⁷⁰White, *Metahistory*, 24.

⁷¹Booth, "The Dark Side," 8.

⁷²White, *Metahistory*, 25.

⁷³Jenkins, *On "What is History?"* 163.

⁷⁴White, *Metahistory*, ix.

⁷⁵See Friedländer, "Introduction," 1-21 for a summary of the critique of White's approach. A more detailed analysis appears in the first half of the book.

⁷⁶Hayden White, "Historical Emplotment and the Problem of Truth," in Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, 38.

⁷⁷Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath, "Introduction," in *Writing Histories: Imagination and Narration*, eds. Ann Curthoys and Ann McGrath (Canberra: Monash Publications in History, 2000), viii.

⁷⁸Appleby, Hunt and Jacob, *Telling the Truth*, 52-90.

⁷⁹Brian Fay, "The Linguistic Turn and Beyond in Contemporary Theory of History," in *History and Theory: Contemporary Readings*, eds. Brian Fay, Philip Pomper and Richard T. Vann (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 1-12.

⁸⁰Tom Griffiths, "The Poetics and Practicalities of Writing," in Curthoys and McGrath, *Writing Histories*, 6.

⁸¹Munslow, *Deconstructing History*, 71.

⁸²Burke, "History of Events," 290.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 288-297.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, 296.