

Hayden White and the Burden of History

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ABSTRACT

*In his essays “The Burden of History” (1966), “Interpretation in History” (1972), “The Historical Text as Literary Artefact” (1974), “The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality” (1980) and “Getting Out of History” (1982), Hayden White discusses the main tenets of his theory of historiography, narrativity and, inevitably, the relationship between the history and literature. In the essays, White argues for a common constructivist character of history and fiction, and rejects the Rankean notion of a ‘science of history’. Drawing support from the historiographical and literary theories of Claude Lévi-Strauss, R. G. Collingwood and Northrop Frye, White suggests historians must acknowledge history’s basis in the literary arts and treat the historical text as a literary artefact in order for the discipline to regain the prestige that it enjoyed in the early nineteenth century. The kind of eclectic history that White advocates is found in Klaus Neumann’s *Not the Way it Really Was*, a text that itself rejects a positivist view of history.*

Keywords: *History, literature, narrativity, positivism, Hayden White, Klaus Neumann*