

**From divergent evolution to witting cross-fertilisation: the need for more awareness of potential inter-discursive communication regarding students' extended historical writing**

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## **Abstract**

History education stakeholders in England have consistently judged that some students find formal historical writing prohibitively difficult due to the demands of constructing an extended argument. While policy makers have agreed students need support in their historical writing, recurring themes in centralised resourcing have been wastage, incoordination and replication. Furthermore, two concurrent but largely disconnected discourses have developed and promulgated initiatives relevant to students' extended historical writing: 'genre theorists' and the 'history teachers' extended writing movement'. Despite certain goals held in common participants in the two discourses have tended to talk past one another with concomitant issues in resourcing. Unsystematic, *cross-fertilisation* between the discourses has led to cycles of genre theory being collectively discovered, forgotten, and rediscovered by history teachers with knowledge not being built cumulatively. Furthermore both discourses have independently developed similar initiatives in a form of *convergent evolution* resulting in duplication of labour. Finally, *divergent evolution* has occurred where genre theorists have advocated approaches that are increasingly redundant for history teachers' requirements. A more activist stance is therefore required to ensure meaningful inter-discursive communication between genre theorists and the history teachers' 'extended writing movement' to ensure efficacy in developing approaches to improving students' extended historical writing.

Keywords: 'historical argument', 'literacy', 'genre theory', 'extended writing movement'

## **Introduction**

### **Why history writing is hard**

As I agonise over this sentence, I am reminded once again that formal academic writing is hard. Furthermore, historical writing presents its own particular challenges. History teachers and education researchers in England have consistently judged that some students find formal historical writing prohibitively difficult because the subject demands the simultaneous mastery of a multitude of variables in order to produce a coherent piece of extended written

historical argument (Counsell, 1997). Many of these demands are rooted in the fact that school history in England requires students to construct their *own* extended written historical arguments in order to achieve the highest levels of attainment (Coffin, 2006). These arguments that students are expected to construct are in response to historical questions that are open-ended and permit a number of plausible responses that may be credited.

Furthermore, different *types* of argument are required depending on the – or combination of – ‘second order concept(s)’ the students are being asked to analyse. These ‘second order concepts’, which were originally specified by the English National Curriculum (Department for Education & Science, 1991), encapsulate the type of questions which members of the historical discipline commonly investigate regarding the past (Fordham, 2016). These ‘second order concepts’ – for example ‘causation’, ‘change and continuity’ and ‘similarity and difference’ – all demand their own particular compositional and linguistic conventions when argued in extended historical writing (e.g. causation Carroll, 2016a; 2016b; change and continuity Foster, 2013; similarity and difference Black, 2012) . Accordingly, students must divine what they have learnt in terms of its applicability in relation to a question pertaining to a particular second order concept. This distinguishing of *information* related to an overarching topic from *evidence* especially pertinent to a conceptually-specific enquiry according to a workable concept of ‘question-relevance’ often proves problematical for students (Counsell, 1997, p.13; Laffin, 2000).

As a consequence of the exacting emphasis on conceptually-specific argument, many history teachers have attested to substantial demands on students’ short-term memory when planning, organising and writing history essays (Byrom, 1998; Counsell, 1997). Accordingly, some history teacher-researchers advocate alleviating the strain on short-term memory in terms of recall of substantive knowledge to allow the memory to focus on the construction of argument. For example, some teachers advocate ‘card sort’ activities utilising knowledge

cards to support recall and allow students to concentrate on the thematic organisation of their response to the specific type of second-order problem that needs to be argued in writing (e.g. Evans & Pate, 2007; Carroll, 2016a). A differing approach to the issue of memory demands developed by some history teacher-researchers is to emphasise the necessity of certain knowledge being consolidated in students' long-term memory to ensure that short-term memory can be free to make vocabulary recognition and formulation of specific argument possible (e.g. Hammond, 2014; King, 2015). The recall, selection and organisation of knowledge relevant to particular types of question therefore represent a significant challenge for secondary students when arguing in their extended historical writing.

Additionally, students must also be alert to the lexical conventions of historical prose, which often includes especially conceptualised, subject-specific vocabulary (Counsell, 1997; Harris, 2001; Woodcock, 2005). Again, this lexis is often specific to the particular second-order concept under investigation. Historical lexicogrammar (structures of words) often requires students to appreciate that historical information is packaged into highly abstracted concepts to give it meaning (Bakalis, 2003; Counsell, 1997). Attempting to command and formulate such lexicogrammar presents challenges for students. For example, while some second-order concepts in history resonate with commonly-held human understandings typically expressed in everyday spoken language, formal historical writing instead demands such concepts be articulated in increasingly technical, abstract and 'uncommonsense' expression (Schleppegrell, 2011). For example, students encounter causation in 'everyday' contexts from a personalised perspective over short time scales – such as appreciating they got into trouble with their teacher *because* they forgot their homework. Historical discourse, however, demands the re-appropriation of this ostensibly straightforward concept to depersonalised abstractions across timescales beyond the realm of their lived experience – for example in arguing that German anti-Semitism originating in the Middle Ages contributed to

the Holocaust (Howson & Shemilt, 2011). This level of formal abstraction often proves taxing for students. Because success in history is dependent on proficiency in arguing in extended analytic writing, exacting requirements such as these at the levels of overall structure and lexicogrammar are sometimes cited as the reason why lower-attaining students are denied access to a historical education beyond the compulsory phase (Andrews, 1995; Banham, 1998; Coffin, 2006; Donaghy, 2013; Harris, 2001; Ward, 2006).

### **Policy makers' concern**

Policy makers in England have been alert to this critical factor affecting the exclusion of the majority of students from post-compulsory study of history (Counsell, 2011a). Until the 1990s, the norm for most of England's secondary school students was not to write extended analytical prose, for while the traditional essay was a fixture of the History O-Level examination, fewer than 20 per cent of students sat these exams (Phillips, 1998). A consequence of this exclusivity of access to formal, historical academic argument was the angst caused by the School Examinations and Assessment Council's (1993) findings in the early 1990s which highlighted the alarming standards of students' extended historical writing. Since then, successive governments have made concerted – yet uncoordinated – attempts to raise standards. Initially, the School Curriculum Assessment Authority (SCAA) created widely-disseminated materials partly based on consultation with history education experts (SCAA, 1997). While the anxiety at the standard of students' extended historical writing remained, the approach to remedying the issue altered with the Labour government in the 2000s with their National Literacy Strategies. Although much centralised guidance was still produced, it tended to de-emphasise the subject-specific advances of history teachers (Counsell, 2004). Instead, a more generic, genre theory-inspired approach to literacy in history was privileged, in which students were instructed to recognise and reproduce strictly

delineated genres (Department for Education and Skills (DfEaS), 2002). This guidance (a) tended to ignore the way in which those genres were blended in history education practice; and (b) failed to note the key drivers of advances in history education – particularly the development of using the subject’s constituent second-order concepts as a framework to construct argument.

For example, the National Literacy Strategy recommended that students be taught specific text types; especially the ‘main categories of non-fiction writing’ such as ‘instruction, recount, explanation, information, persuasion, discursive writing, analysis, and evaluation’ (DfEaS, 2002 p.19-20). This strict delineation of ‘genres’ based on generic application of ‘non-fiction writing’ conventions conflicted with some teachers’ history-specific recommendations that were emerging at the time. For example, Lang (2003) argued that the artificial demarcation of school history genres had led to school history becoming divorced from its academic antecedent. Academic history, Lang argued, was characterised by being generally narrative (recount); while also being highly explanatory, informative, persuasive, discursive, analytical, and evaluative. Furthermore, there was little latitude with these generic text types applicable to all ‘non-fiction’ for history teachers to fine-tune them specifically to the second-order concepts that the government’s own history curriculum demanded. Generic ‘analysis’ or ‘discursive writing’, for example, offered only general guidelines relevant to the particular types of analyses required with different historical second order concepts: such as causation as opposed to change and continuity. In sum, it would appear that while policy makers have agreed that students need support in their historical writing, recurring themes in resourcing have been wastage, incoordination and replication.

### **Development of differing discourses to students’ historical writing**

Lack of practical coordination in policy is only one symptom of the way in which history teacher-generated solutions, even where the resulting discourse is internally coherent, cumulative, theorised and published, fail to travel into parallel spaces beyond the subject community, resulting in replication, misrepresentation or waste. Two concurrent but largely disconnected discourses have emerged that have sought to develop and promulgate ideas and initiatives relevant to students' extended historical writing: 'genre theorists' and the 'history teachers' extended writing movement'. As these discourses have crystallised and become more specialised, the likelihood of their interaction appears to have lessened (Becher, 1993; Clark, 1963). This may be partly the result of what Campbell (1969, c.f. Becher, 1993) identified as 'tribalism or nationalism or ingroup partisanship' (p.40) which, in some senses, has promoted an 'artificial alienation and distance between even closely-related specialities on either side of a boundary' (Becher, 1993, p.40).

### ***Australian Genre Theory***

First, genre-based approaches to school literacy inspired by Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL) have been influential for some time. As early as the 1960s the originator of SFL, Michael Halliday, was invited to develop an English Curriculum proposal for the Nuffield Foundation; leading to the *Nuffield/Schools Council Programme in Linguistics and English Teaching* (1964-71). This programme produced extensive materials for schools which were 'influential in their day, and some of which remain in use' (Christie, 2007, p.5; Hasan & Martin, 1989; Christie & Unsworth, 2005). By the 1990s, SFL had a 'reasonably well-established history of involvement in education, having been drawn upon in a number of educational projects and reports in the UK' – for example in the development of the Language in the National Curriculum Project (Christie, 1998, p.52-53).

In fact, Hallidayan ideas were so influential that they were institutionally enshrined with the Labour government's National Literacy Strategies (DfEaS, 2002, p.20) which were heavily inspired by repurposed SFL genre-based pedagogies as advocated by the 'Sydney School' of 'genre theorists' (e.g. Martin, 1985; Christie, 1985). Genre theorists have been heavily influenced by Michael Halliday's notion of 'functional grammar' which suggests that the context in which language is produced strongly determines the grammatical choices that one makes. A great deal of work of the 'Sydney School' and its supporters, particularly initially by Martin (e.g. 1992), has attempted to apply Halliday's ideas pedagogically by identifying the text types and genres common in school history in a variety of international contexts (e.g. Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Coffin 1997, 2000, 2004, 2006; Coffin and Derewianka 2008a and b; Eggins, Martin & Wignell, 1993; Martin 2002, 2003; Martin & Rose, 2003, 2008; McNamara, 1989; Oteíza, 2003; Schleppegrell, 2011; Schleppegrell, Achugar & Oteíza 2004; Unsworth, 1999; Veel & Coffin, 1996). In this view, writers typically make particular choices according to particular social contexts, leading to 'predictable text structures or genres' (Coffin 2006, p.27). 'Genre', in this view, has a specifically narrow meaning referring to *why* language was produced, and has been described as a 'staged, purposeful, goal-directed activity represented in language' (Christie, 1998, p.53). Once genres have been deconstructed, they can be explicitly taught to pupils who can be 'apprenticed' into reproducing them (Donaghy, 2013). Genre theorists argue that due to their importance in building and communicating written information such genres need to be 'the subject of overt teaching and learning' so that students can become more competent in their uses (Christie & Misson, 1998, p.11). For example, one of the most ardent history practitioners advocating this genre-based approach, Donaghy (2013), guides students to produce genres such as 'factorial explanation' or 'argument – exposition'. Perhaps the most enduring legacy of these initiatives in English schools were the recommendations, building



on Australian genre theory, of Maureen Lewis and David Wray (e.g. 1997) at Exeter University of 'writing frames' to support and develop students' extended writing.

### ***English History Teachers' 'Extended Writing Movement'***

A second discourse to emerge in the last fifteen years related to students' historical writing has been dubbed the English history teachers' 'extended writing movement' (Counsell, 2011a, p.16). While this label is necessarily imperfect and members of the 'movement' may not recognise themselves by such a term, for the purposes of this article it will be applied to a group of approximately forty researchers which has been largely, though not exclusively, teacher-led and have independently developed approaches to improving students' extended written arguments. Similarly to the English policy makers, this movement had its origins in the concern of the 1990s regarding the standard of students' extended historical writing and sought to give the teaching of written historical argument a specific focus. What united the 'movement' was a concern to solve a problem of practice based on awareness that extended historical writing was still avoided by many history teachers, given that there was little enforced requirement to do so despite it being the mode of expression through which academic historical knowledge is constructed. From this starting point, many of these teachers began to consider what characterises academic historical writing and to identify which of these historically-specific characteristics students find challenging. In beginning this theorisation, these teachers and education researchers took the initiative themselves by placing primacy on the disciplinary underpinnings of historical writing (Banham, 1998; Counsell, 1997; Dove, 2000; Harris, 2001; Laffin, 2000; Mulholland, 1998; Waters, 2003; Wiltshire, 2000). Consequently, many teacher-researchers over the last fifteen years have attempted to ensure literacy is not 'bolted on' (Counsell, 2004, p.4 & 111) to the history, but instead serves and emerges organically from the discipline, distinct from other subjects

(Counsell, 2011a; Ward, 2006; Woodcock, 2005). Perhaps as a reaction against the centralised national push for historical approaches to literacy in the National Literacy Strategies that failed to adequately integrate subject-specificity even while trying to provide guidance on it, participants in the 'extended writing movement' have increasingly used the subject's second order concepts as a framework to explore how to enable students to construct conceptually-specific written arguments (e.g. causation Woodcock, 2005; Carroll 2016a, 2016b; change and continuity Jarman, 2009, Foster, 2013; similarity and difference Bradshaw, 2009; Black, 2012; evidential thinking Foster & Gadd, 2013).

In recognising commonly experienced difficulties students face with historical writing, the 'extended writing movement' shares a number of aims with genre theorists. For example, like genre theorists (e.g. Christie, 2007), this 'movement' intended to ensure that extended historical writing was made accessible to the whole ability range, rather than an exclusive elite: an ambitious task that required a 'discrete and systematic teaching focus of its own' (Byrom, 1998, p.32). An additional point of agreement between genre theorists (e.g. Donaghy, 2013) and the 'extended writing movement' (e.g. Foster, 2015) therefore is that history teachers should take more responsibility for this subject-specific literacy instruction. Furthermore, both discourses emphasise the need for students to be made explicitly aware of the formal registers valued in academic historical writing (Andrews, 1995; Coffin, 2006; Donaghy, 2013; Evans & Pate, 2007; Waters, 2003).

Yet despite certain goals held in common by genre theorists and the history teachers' 'extended writing movement' the two discourses have tended to talk past one another. Here, I have used Fordham's (2015) definition of a published 'discourse' where themes have emerged which have been addressed by a number of teachers and/or researchers in their writing, with subsequent teachers and/or researchers advancing the conversation further by explicit reference to those who wrote before (p.139). In surveying these two territories, I have

discerned a systemic lack of communication between the two discourses. First, I shall outline the trends of limited cross-traffic between the two discourses with salient examples (see Figure 1); and sketch concomitant issues with resourcing that have developed as a consequence. In doing so I will argue that a more activist stance is required to ensure meaningful inter-discursive communication between genre theorists and the history teachers' 'extended writing movement' to ensure more efficacy in developing approaches to improving students' extended historical writing (Campbell, 1969).

## **A taxonomy of the interrelationship between the discourses**

### **Witting yet unsystematic *cross-fertilisation***

First, a chronological perspective of the literature reveals the collective amnesia and rediscovery of genre theory by history education stakeholders. For example, centralised initiatives rooted in SFL like the National Literacy Strategies have garnered history education advocates in English primary and secondary schools with some history teachers extolling their 'mind-blowing ideas of functional literacy and its genre theory that underpinned their pioneering and radical creation of writing frames' (Nichol, 2011, p.8-9). Despite some history educators suggesting 'genre theory was a blinding revelation, an epiphanic moment' (Nuffield Primary History Project, 2012, p.20), these epiphanies have often not been built upon; partly because the lineage of the initiatives have not been made explicit.

For example, these insufficient explanations of the genealogy of even such established approaches as the National Literacy Strategies has resulted in isolated practitioners continuing to make similar 'breakthroughs' afresh that in reality mirror pre-existing, widely disseminated materials. For example, the history teacher and blogger Donaghy (2013) argued that after an 'enormous amount of thought into my approach to teaching over the past 2 years' it was 'vital' to share his 'new-style' 'genre-based pedagogy' heavily influenced by

Halliday and the Sydney School. As well as his reading of Coffin (2006) in particular, his reflection was inspired, in part, by a reaction to the increasing orthodoxy in English schools of ‘painfully limited and limiting’ paragraph structure heuristics such as ‘P-E-E’ (Point, Evidence, Explanation). ‘P-E-E’ and other models designed to enable students to organise paragraphs coherently (e.g. ‘PEEL’ (Point, Evidence, Explanation, Link) Fordham, 2007, p.37; ‘PEGEX’ (Point, Evidence, Explanation) Evans & Pate, 2007, p.26); ‘hamburger paragraphs’ Banham, 1998, p.10; and ‘evidence sandwiches’ Mulholland, 1998, p.17) have become increasingly ubiquitous in English secondary schools (Foster & Gadd, 2013). Ironically, however, it is highly likely that these scaffolds were, like Donaghy’s genre-based pedagogy, in fact directly influenced by genre theory – particularly Martin’s (1992, p.454-456) suggestion that students’ paragraphs be clearly organised by *hypertheme*, evidence and *hypernew*. In this structure, ‘topics are introduced in the Hypertheme, and grounds (evidence) are in the middle of paragraphs’ and ‘it is important to notice the end of paragraphs as this is where the hypernew or claims tends to be most explicit’ (Nesi & Gardner, 2012, p.110). As Counsell, Burn, Fordham and Foster (2015) noted, ‘intellectual cross-currents such as Australian genre theory are all too easily hidden. But they matter. We need to know who has followed (or reacted against) what and why. Otherwise we re-invent wheels both round and square’ (p.17).

### ***Unwitting cross-fertilisation***

Second, a further consequence of centralised initiatives like the National Literacy Strategies not being clearly demarcated as Hallidayan in their origin has been *unwitting cross-fertilisation* between the two discourses – where history teachers seeking to improve students’ extended writing have been influenced by genre theory without apparently being cognisant of the stimulus for their approach. This *unwitting cross-fertilisation* has been most

evident in the form of heavy emphases on ‘text types’ and ‘writing frames’ which became commonplace in history departments in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. For example, following governmental guidance, students have increasingly been instructed to write ‘narratives, descriptions, explanations and interpretations’, so ‘that any question chosen fits neatly into of these writing types.’ (Scott, 2006, p. 28); yet teachers advocating such focus on text types have been doing so without any apparent awareness of the fact that these centralised initiatives had Hallidayan origins. Similarly, around the turn of the century, early developments in the ‘extended writing movement’ clearly displayed vestiges of the SFL-influenced National Literacy Strategies. This influence, however, was apparently often unwitting and usually failed to cite its genre theory antecedents. For example, genre theorists suggest the explicit teaching of essay structure and paragraph cohesion, suggesting that it is essential in developing the ‘textual metafunction’ – the intention to engender or create cohesion in texts (Coffin, 2006, p.39). Similarly, history teachers recommended whole-text (Banham 1998; Harris, 2001); paragraph (Bakalis, 2003; Banham, 1998; Mulholland, 1998) and sentence starter (Banham, 1998; Carlisle, 2000; Wiltshire, 2000; Smith, 2001) writing frames. Very quickly, however, some history teachers in the ‘extended writing movement’ sought to distinguish their scaffolding of writing structures from genre theory-inspired guidance. In particular, teachers in the ‘extended writing movement’ attempted to shun cross-subject genericism in order to render such frames disciplinarily historical. As Counsell (2011a) suggested teachers grew frustrated because Lewis and Wray’s writing frames ‘treated writing (and reading) as managing free-floating, non-subject specific ‘information’ rather than examining its role fostering the relational structures, substantive concepts and evidential modes particular to individual disciplines’ (p.68) Consequently, some history teacher-researchers began to react against the perceived limiting of students’ *historical* analysis as a result of using such frames (Counsell, 1997; Evans & Pate, 2007). Furthermore, starting with

Woodcock (2005), debates regarding students' historical literacy began to shift from structure to incorporate debates about style specifically tailored to enable argument in relation to history's specific second order concepts (e.g. Bradshaw, 2009; Fielding, 2015; Foster, 2013; Jarman, 2009; Woodcock, 2005). In sum, history teachers have been, on occasion, unwittingly influenced by *and* critical of SFL-inspired approaches without necessarily being cognisant of the inter-discursive quality of their contributing to, critiquing and developing of public knowledge.

It would appear then that even on the rare occasions that there has been *cross-fertilisation* between the discourses of genre theory and the 'extended writing movement' – either *wittingly* in collaborative projects between genre theorists and teachers (e.g. Coffin, North & Martin, 2007) or teachers clearly citing genre theory (e.g. Nichol, 2011; Donaghy, 2013); or *unwittingly* through development of techniques actually Hallidayan in origin – this inter-discursive cross-traffic has not resulted in this potentially cumulative knowledge being sufficiently identified and/or suitably disseminated as examples of fruitful *cross-fertilisation*. This inadequately cumulated *cross-fertilisation* has led to repetition and therefore wastage for history teachers and policy makers who appeared to have cyclically and collectively discovered, forgotten, critiqued and rediscovered genre theory and the potential it has for developing students' historical writing (e.g. Donaghy, 2013).

Furthermore, with rare exceptions (e.g. Coffin, North & Martin, 2007), this *cross-fertilisation* has been almost uniformly one-way. While history teacher-researchers in England have occasionally drawn on genre theory, systemic functional linguists have been seemingly incognisant of the possibility of drawing on the cumulative, disciplinary knowledge of English history teachers. The boundaries between the discourses may be more closely defended from the genre theorists' side because its disciplinary community is more tightly-knit and clearly self-defining with shared fundamental ideologies and common values.

With a stronger awareness of belonging to a unique tradition genre theorists therefore may be more likely to defend well-defined external disciplinary frontiers (Bacher, 1993). Conversely, the ‘extended writing movement’ is more divergent and loosely-knit lacking such a clear sense of mutual cohesion and identity; resulting in their border zones functioning more as a semi-permeable membrane. Furthermore, the ‘extended writing movement’ has largely been teacher-led. Consequently, many academics might not recognise the movement as an academic discourse which is cumulative, theoretically powerful and generative (Counsell 2011a, 2011b; Fordham 2015). In short, even when potentially fruitful *cross-fertilisation* might have taken place systematic measures have not yet been taken to maximise the yield, resulting in unnecessary duplication and wastage in labour and resourcing. Further inter-discursive work is needed to ensure that such a time loop is broken. This communication only seems plausible through the allowance of greater latitude between the discourses’ adjoining and overlapping boundaries.

### ***Convergent evolution***

In fact the wider trend has been for the two discourses to largely ignore one another entirely. In some instances this lack of communication has led to examples of potentially unnecessary reinvention because, despite representing different lineages, the two discourses have been faced with similar ecological niches in the history classroom. Consequently, both discourses have independently developed similar responses in a form of *convergent evolution* resulting in further duplication of labour.

One example of *convergent evolution* has been both discourses’ attempts to make the need for abstracted generalisation in formal historical writing explicit to students. Genre theorists have increasingly argued for the need for history students to be made aware of the importance of ‘nominalisation’ in formal academic writing. Especially in ‘everyday’

conversation there is stratal harmony with experience construed congruently (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). In other words, in conversational interaction grammar tends to match semantics with a ‘natural pairing off’ (Martin, 2007, p.52) of processes with verbs, participants with nouns, qualities with adjectives and logical relations with conjunctions. For example, an informal sentence might read ‘the peasants [noun/participants] were angry [adjective/quality] about their wages going down [verb/process] after enclosure so [conjunction/logical relation] they rebelled [verb/process] in 1549’.

In formal discourse, however, Halliday (e.g. Halliday, 1998; Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999) identified what genre theorists believe to be a vital phenomenon distinguishing informal discourse from formal academic writing – ‘grammatical metaphor’ (see Figure 2). Grammatical metaphor acts in a similar way to lexical metaphor, except with lexicogrammar (structures of words) instead of words (Martin, 2007). In formal discourse, processes, qualities and logical relations are often instead realised as nouns, and logical relations realised as prepositional phrases, verbs and nouns – resulting in stratal tensions where there is a non-matching between grammar and semantics (Martin, 2007). For example, in formal historical discourse a sentence might read ‘The ‘Commotion Time’ of 1549 [noun/processes] was underpinned [verb/logical relation] by growing resentment to wage decreases [noun/qualities and processes]’. As a result of this tension, there is an ensuing mismatch between what the reader might typically expect (the ‘literal’) and the unexpected realisation of these meanings (‘the metaphorical’) (Christie & Derewianka, 2008, p. 24-25). The key derivation of this ‘grammatical metaphor’ is ‘nominalisation’ during which activities are reconstructed as abstract things. This type of ‘thingification’ (Martin, 2007, p.44-45) involves reconstruing and distilling activities presented in a whole clause as an abstracted nominal group and, according to genre theorists, is a recurrent feature of technicalised historical discourse (Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2011).



Allied to this focus, in this view these nominalisations act upon one another in a similarly abstracted manner (Schleppegrell, Achugar & Oteíza 2004). For example, genre theorists have identified older students' tendency to bury 'the cause within the clause' (Martin, 2007, p.45-46). Martin has suggested that historical discourse compared to, for example, science, generally avoids explicit conjunctions. Instead, causal relations in particular tend to be portrayed as prepositional phrases, nouns or verbs. Martin (2007) argues that this tendency enables 'historians to fine tune causality' and 'enact finely differentiated types of cause and effect relations'. So, for example, a historian would rarely write that 'Hitler became Chancellor *because* of the complacency of elite conservatives' but might instead argue 'The conservative elites' complacency *facilitated* Hitler's rise to the Chancellorship'. Whereas conjunctions such as 'because' or 'so' are essentially neutral, the use of prepositional phrases, nouns, and verbs allows for simple inter-causal relationships to be 'transformed into a finely nuanced clause-internal repertoire for interpretation as these resources are brought to bear' (p.45-46).

Although English history teachers and researchers have approached the issue from a predominantly disciplinary rather than lexicogrammatical perspective, the focus on this type of abstraction is a pertinent example of *convergent evolution* between genre theory and the 'extended writing movement'. First, the cognitive research of the educational researchers Howson and Shemilt (2011), which has been influential in the 'extended writing movement's' discourse, has similarly noted that sophisticated historical argument tends to be driven by 'colligatory generalisations' (p.73) such as the 'Industrial Revolution', 'The First World War' or the 'Great Depression'. In this view, colligatory generalisations are encapsulating abstractions that package events under one umbrella term and thus allow the thematic organisation of historical knowledge. Furthermore, these generalisations do not have direct experiential referents and therefore cannot be explained by referring solely to a

concrete object, person or event. Similarly, in the English history teacher research tradition, Counsell (1997) likewise identified students' difficulty in distinguishing between 'big points' (the abstracted generalisation that forms the point of argument in each paragraph) and 'little points' (supporting evidence that substantiates the overarching point). Similar ideas have been proffered by Palek (2015) who has focused on the relationship between literacy and the construction of substantive abstractions and Fordham (2016) who has explored the necessarily interpretative nature of such abstractions. Although they present it largely as a disciplinary rather than linguistic issue, these two traditions within the discourse of the 'extended writing movement' bear striking similarity to the genre theorists' suggestion for more explicit focus on nominalisation. These separate identifications of students' difficulty in creating generalised abstractions indicate certain commonalities that suggest at least some duplication of labour.

Similarly, echoing the genre theorists' suggestion that historical discourse often 'buries' overt causal language, Lee and Shemilt (2009) have identified the tendency in historical discourse to bury the analytical 'ductwork' (p.42-49) of causal analysis. Equally, in the history teacher researcher tradition, there has been a trend starting with Woodcock (2005) in attempting to endow students with this type of causation-specific vocabulary to allow the characterisation and prioritisation of causal factors. As with the case of nominalisation, despite the clear scope for meaningful collaboration, there has been little attempt hitherto to combine the 'extended writing movement's' focus on the disciplinary and the genre theorists' lexicogrammatical technology to support students' arguments when constructing complex, nominalised abstractions and the causal relationships between them in historical prose (Carroll, 2016a).

A further salient example of this duplication of labour has been the two discourses' similar approaches to making students alert to the 'constructedness' of historical texts, with

the intention that this type of analysis will make the argumentative nature of written historical discourse more explicit. The genre theorist Coffin (1996) recommended approaches to allow students to discern the grammatical means by which school history authors (especially textbook writers) ‘colour’ texts to position the reader to see an argument from the writer’s viewpoint. By showing students these ‘colouring’ techniques, Coffin argues that students will come to recognise school history textbooks as works of interpretation, and will be less likely to accept such texts at face value. Coffin identified a number of ‘colouring strategies’ that textbook writers adopt including tacitly expressing ideological perspective by adopting language affect, judgement and evaluation; and using language that effaces the writer as interpreter and submerges process of deduction (Unsworth, 1999). Furthermore, Coffin recommended that students be made aware of how interpretation is obscured through nominalisation (when multiple events are repackaged as an abstracted noun). In this view, such nominalised generalisation (such as ‘period of lawlessness’ as opposed to ‘period of resistance’) often means interpretations become naturalised as deceptively objective.

In some senses, history teachers in the ‘extended writing movement’ have developed strikingly similar methods to attempt to alert students to the fact that all works of history are results of interpretation – representing a marked example of *convergent evolution*. For example, a number of practising and former history teachers (e.g. Burnham & Brown, 2009; Counsell, 2011b; Fordham, 2016) have advocated making children aware of how colligatory generalisations tread the penumbra between the substantive and the disciplinary and must therefore be deconstructed as historical interpretations. Similarly, history teachers have also recommended students be taught to analyse history textbooks as historical constructs (Edwards, 2008). Genre theorists and the ‘extended writing movement’ have occasionally – and independently – arrived at similar solutions (e.g. encouraging students to identify the interpretative quality of historical texts (e.g. Counsell, 2003)). This type of *convergent*

*evolution* has meant that opportunities have been missed to co-construct knowledge regarding extended historical writing and has resulted in a duplication of exceedingly similar ‘innovations’.

Similarly, genre theorists are concerned with empowering students with subject-specific lexis (Christie & Derewianka, 2008). Similarly, history teachers in the ‘extended writing movement’ have focused on atomised vocabulary (e.g. causal connectives (Bakalis, 2003, p.22); superlatives and adjectives (Ward, 2006, p.11); causal and temporal connectives (Counsell, 1997, p.16); and verbs focused on causation (Woodcock, 2005, p.9)). Within this lexical focus, there has been further evidence of *convergent evolution*. For example, history teachers have advocated highlighting the inferential nature of discussing evidence through using distancing verbs such as ‘suggest’ (Carlisle, 2000; Counsell, 2004; Murray, 2015; Smith, 2001; Wiltshire 2000). This lexical focus is strikingly analogous to some genre theorists’ suggestion that students be encouraged to adopt ‘showing processes’ such as ‘suggest’ and ‘indicate’ (Christie & Derewianka, 2008 120-122). Similarly, both history teacher-researchers (e.g. Counsell, 2004, p.22) and genre theorists (e.g. Coffin, 2006) have advocated using modal verbs to indicate to students the tentative nature of historical claims. In terms of supporting students’ vocabulary then, there also appears to be evidence of wastage due to lack of communication between the two discourses.

### ***Parallel/divergent evolution***

Finally, in some instances the the two discourses have evolved in parallel or indeed veered from the other. This *parallel* and/or *divergent* evolution has manifested itself in a number of ways resulting in hitherto undetected – and therefore unresolved – tensions between the two discourses. If left unsettled these discrepancies have the potential to ultimately result in unresolvable disagreements and missed opportunities to marry the two discourses as there

will be little in terms of commonly-shared constructions of knowledge on which to hang the debates.

What has largely distinguished genre theorists has been their advocacy of explicitly focusing on teaching students how to construct meaning at a level that has hitherto been generally underexplored by the ‘extended writing movement’ (for an exception and possible nascent example *convergent evolution* see Foster, 2015) - by combining words together at the lexicogrammatical level of the sentence or clause (Coffin, 2006; Martin, 2007; Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2011; Donaghy, 2013). There is scope for the ‘extended writing movement’ to build on the pre-existing knowledge of genre theory and consider how students may be made more alert to how historical meaning is constructed at the lexicogrammatical level (Carroll, 2016b).

Not only have opportunities for fruitful collaboration been missed, the two discourses have also in certain instances developed in directly antithetical ways. Due to the genre theorists’ debt to Halliday, many are ‘utterly convinced’ (e.g. Donaghy, 2013, p.35) that the metalanguage of functional grammar should be used in classrooms. This is opposed to the discourse for discussing language used in formal, traditional grammar which currently predominates. The metalanguage of functional grammar seeks to emphasise how meaning is made beyond the atomised level of the word. Genre theorists then, for example, advocate substituting ‘verb’ with ‘process’; ‘subjects and objects’ with ‘participants’; ‘topic sentence’ with ‘hypertheme; and ‘introduction’ with ‘macrotheme’ (Coffin, 2006, p.121; Donaghy, 2013, p.25, 30-32, 35-40). This elaborate metalanguage is so crucial to SFL pedagogy that ‘‘Sydney School’ literacy programmes in fact involve doubling the instructional discourse, since disciplines are factored as systems of genres (and thus of field, tenor, mode constellations and of their realisation in language and attendant non-verbal modalities of communication)’ (Martin, 2007, p.56). Martin (2007) suggests that teachers, who are often

not linguists by training, find the array of technicalisation associated with SFL ‘a shock’, and it is for this reason that they choose to forego adopting genre-based pedagogies. Instead, in Martin’s view, teachers are content to prevaricate in adopting genre theory because ‘the new knowledge about language required costs time and therefore money, teachers are busy, and stratified learning outcomes are blamed on the ability levels of individual students’ (p.58). The development of this elaborate metalanguage, as conceded by genre theorists, has helped shape their cultural identity but has also, unintentionally, served an exclusionary function (Becher, 1993). This technicalisation, however, is possibly not the only reason that practising history teachers have been slow to adopt genre theory. Not only has the language become highly technicalised, but it is also increasingly redundant to the history teachers in England who have developed their own metalanguage which is more specifically designed to their requirements. Only once genre theorists examine history teachers’ discourse and make a connection with it might such ultimately redundant avenues be avoided.

A particularly instructive example of this *divergent evolution* is the recommendation from genre theory (e.g. Christie and Derewianka, 2008) of students ‘testing and evaluating’ the ‘reliability’, ‘truthfulness’ and ‘bias’ of historical sources (p.89, 140-141). In order to exemplify a ‘benchmark’ (p.5-6) ‘well-developed text’ representative ‘of the most demanding of the history genres’ (p.139) Christie and Derewianka cited a student they commended for identifying Paul Kennedy as ‘a ‘revisionist’ and the trustworthiness of his views is evaluated positively through judgement of his capacity: ‘He is also a trained historian with a PhD from Oxford and a Professorship at Yale University’ which would render his work ‘more accurate’ (p.142). Similarly, Christie and Derewianka suggested the same student commendably judged the historian Martin Gilbert as;

‘having great expertise: ‘he is a distinguished historian who was a Fellow at Merton College Oxford’. Because of his training in historical investigation, his views can be considered ‘reliable’.

However, as a ‘Jew’ and an ‘expert on the Holocaust’ his account could be regarded as ‘biased’  
(p.144)

By contrast, in the ‘extended writing movement’, responses similar to this have not only been considered achievable for students of lower age groups – they have actually been considered reductive, imitative and fundamentally anti-historical. As Fordham (2014) suggested, among the published history teacher research community in England, pedagogies that valorise this type of source analysis have been ‘criticised consistently, coherently and relentlessly since Lang’s 1993 article ‘What is bias?’ First, Lang (1993) criticised the ‘fearless unmasking of bias’ (p.9) a contrivance of examination mark schemes and history textbook authors rather than academic historical discourse. As Lang (1993) noted such approaches ‘misrepresent the nature of historical sources: *all* sources are biased, so it makes little sense to ask children to identify ones that are. They are, in other words, unhistorical questions, and it is unfair to throw them at children. Much the same holds good for questions about the usefulness of sources’ (p.13). Far from conceptualising examples such as the one above as a curricular goal for her 11-year-old students Le Cocq (2000), expounding on Lang, rejected her pupils’ similar responses as unsuitably reductive for the age group suggesting ‘once pupils grasp the word ‘bias’ it so often becomes a hackneyed catch-all, blunting and limiting their evaluative work’ (p.50). Similarly, Le Cocq wanted to ‘avoid the formulaic, low-level responses that are often parroted in response to any source deemed ‘untrustworthy’’ (p.51). In this view, the ascription of such value to responses which offer what is deemed to be seemingly trite, mechanical and non-evaluative responses to historiography by pedagogies such as genre theory is inappropriate. From this perspective, pedagogies that adopt examination syllabuses and history textbooks as the arbiter and model of successful historical reasoning results in the proliferation of mark-scheme-derived sub-genres which substitute clichéd imitation for historical reasoning as an academic historian

would understand it. It would appear that if genre theorists wish to make a more meaningful contribution to history teachers' practice, then they need to be more receptive to the trends currently driving the 'extended writing movement'. Without doing so, the recommendations of genre theorists may be deemed irrelevant to history teachers' needs.

## **Recommendations for future research**

Despite a widespread recognition by history education stakeholders of the need for disciplinary-specific approaches to students' extended writing, small-scale successes have not been scaled up into widespread solutions. As a result, guidance and recommendations have often been pluralistic to the point of contradiction. Rather than merely adding yet another approach, a new direction in empirical research could uncover and exploit hitherto unexplored connections and continuities within this corpus. Adjoining discourses laying claim to the same pieces of 'intellectual territory' 'does not necessarily entail a conflict between them' but instead can 'mark a growing unification of ideas and approaches' (Becher, 1993, p.38). I recommend a more interventionist approach, seeking to move beyond simply identifying opportunities for unification to actively breaking down increasingly formalised boundaries.

For example, I have attempted to identify some commonalities and incongruities between the two discourses of 'genre theory' and the 'extended writing movement'. While there have been some limited attempts by English history teachers to draw on genre theory, this has largely been a one-way relationship. From both sides, inter-discursive communication is necessary. This would potentially have a number of benefits in developing students' historical writing. First, wastefully repetitive 'discoveries' of genre theory by English history teachers and policy makers might be avoided. Second, history teachers' unwitting critiques and developments of genre theory may be clearly identified as such, allowing for both discourses to develop solutions in light of each other's evaluations. Third,



duplication of similar ‘innovations’ by both discourses in response to similar identifications of students’ difficulties might be avoided. Finally, genre theorists’ might avoid making further recommendations that are increasingly redundant for history teachers’ needs. Without attempts to redress this pluralism by resolving issues and developing a context where there is a closer alignment in terms of theories and methods of inquiry, systematic advances in the knowledge regarding students’ extended historical writing, as has been evidenced, might be disallowed (Kuhn, 1970 c.f. Becher, 1993).

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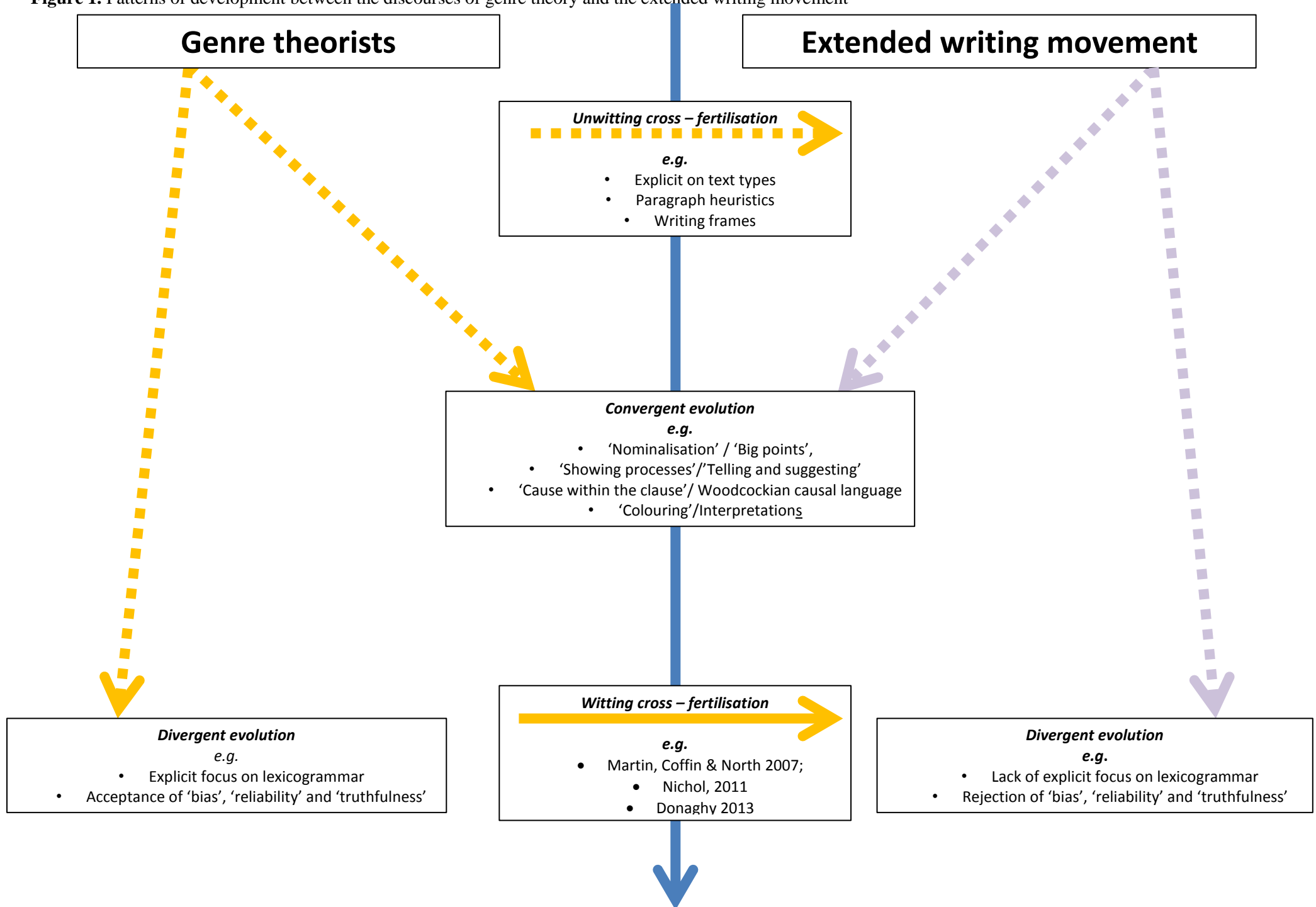
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### **Figure Captions**

**Figure 1.** Patterns of development between the discourses of genre theory and the extended writing movement

**Figure 2.** Abridged version of Martin's (2007) schema of 'grammatical metaphor'.

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