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## Which-hunting in Medieval England

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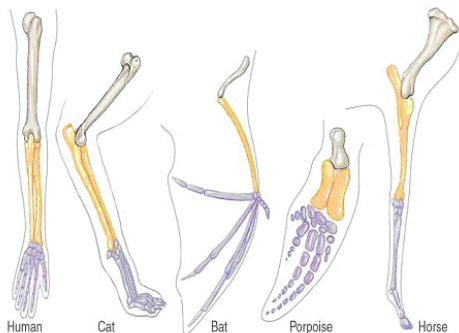


# *Which*-hunting in Medieval England

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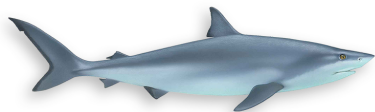
SHES, 11/6/16

## Divergent evolution



English	Latin	Sanskrit	Old Irish
mother	māter	mātár	māthir
father	pater	pitár	athir
brother	frāter	bhrátar	brāth(a)ir

# Convergent evolution



Shark (fish)



Dolphin (mammal)



Ichthyosaur (reptile)

	head	reflexive
<b>Fulfulde</b> (Niger-Congo)	hōre	hōre māko
<b>Hausa</b> (Chadic)	kaì	kânsù
<b>Basque</b> (isolate)	buru	bere burua

(Heine & Kuteva 2002)

## Parallel evolution



- ▶ Daughter languages contain cognate forms.
- ▶ The same **new** function is repeatedly associated with those forms.
- ▶ There is no obvious reason for this new function to develop repeatedly.
- ▶ The form–function relation is less common in genetically unrelated languages.

## Distribution of headed *wh*-relatives

	IE	Other
<i>Wh</i> -RC	19 (47.5%)	3 (2.3%)
Other	21 (52.5%)	129 (97.7%)

Table 1: Headed *wh*-relatives in 172 languages (based on De Vries 2002)

- ▶ However, Proto-Indo-European only had adjoined relatives, particularly correlatives (Clackson 2007, Belyaev & Haug 2014).
- ▶ Headed *wh*-relatives have therefore evolved repeatedly in parallel in daughter languages.
- ▶ Visible repeatedly in the textual record.

## On contact

- ▶ Comrie (1998): *wh*-relatives are a European, not an IE phenomenon.
  - ▶ Also attested in neighbouring unrelated languages.
- ▶ However, fine details of varieties in contact are rarely similar.
- ▶ Plausible contact situations aren't always in evidence.

(1) de fout **wie** hun eigenlijk maken  
the mistake who they actually make  
'the mistake which they actually make'

(Johan Cruyff, via Boef 2012)

- ▶ So contact can't explain everything.
- ▶ (See also Poplack et al. 2012 on French P-stranding, Pavel losad on the north European Sprachbund, s-framed → v-framed in Romance, ...)

## Elements of an explanatory theory

1. PIE has unusual properties (explains phylogenetic aspects of the typological distribution).
2. Change is stochastic, but asymmetric (explains why daughter languages can tend to move *en masse* away from their common ancestor).
  - ▶ Certain innovations are likely to occur and to spread in daughter languages.
  - ▶ Those innovations are unlikely to occur and/or spread in non-IE languages.
3. (Contact may be necessary to explain areal aspects of the typological distribution, but there are lots of open questions about what was borrowed when).



# Today

- ▶ An attempt to argue that parallel evolution is in evidence even in the emergence of different English headed *wh*-relatives.
  - ▶ The first headed *wh*-relatives emerged as a result of reanalysis of free *wh*-relatives.
  - ▶ And so did a second wave of headed relatives, with *which*, c.200 years later.
1. Early IE background;
  2. The first English headed *wh*-relatives;
  3. *Which*-relatives;
  4. Extrapolating beyond English.

## Section 1

What's special about IE?

# Stability of forms, instability of functions

- ▶ Relativization strategies are quite unstable:
  - ▶ Cruyff, again.
  - ▶ Early Modern Icelandic experiments with *hv-*, *þ-*, etc.
  - ▶ English *se*, *þe*, *ø*, *wh-*, *as*, etc.
  - ▶ ...
- ▶ But the strategies are constructed around conservative **forms**.
- ▶ English *wh*-forms and cognates are descended from PIE  $k^w i-$ / $k^w o-$ .
- ▶ Original functions: probably interrogative and (restricted) indefinite (e.g. Belyaev & Haug 2014).

## Early IE correlatives

- ▶ Belyaev & Haug: bipartite asyndetic conditional structure + *wh*-indefinite  $\rightsquigarrow$  correlative.

(2) [kuiš=an=šan EGIR-pa tarnai] n=an  
WH=him=PTCL back lets PTCL=him  
šakuwanzī  
they.imprison  
'If anyone lets him back, they will imprison him.'  $\rightsquigarrow$   
'Whoever lets him back, they will imprison him.'  
(Garrett 2008, conditional 'back-formation' mine)

- ▶ Correlatives are rare (< 3% of languages in Dryer 2013) and overrepresented in IE (De Vries 2002).
- ▶ Correlatives with interrogative forms are even rarer.
- ▶ Correlatives and antecedent structures are therefore a plausible distinctive property of PIE.

# PIE $\rightsquigarrow$ English

## Prehistory

- ▶ Universal  $\rightsquigarrow$  definite *wh*-correlatives (Belyaev & Haug 2014);
- ▶ Loss of multiple correlatives (unattested in English written record);
- ▶ Generalization from clause-initial  $\rightsquigarrow$  clause-peripheral position.
- ▶ By the start of the written history of English, correlatives have morphed into left-dislocated free relatives + resumption.
- ▶ Those free *wh*-relatives look much like they do today (words aside).

## OE free *wh*-relatives

Clause-initial, universal, *swa* obligatory

- (3) [Swa **hwylc** eower swa næfð nane synne on him],  
So which you.GEN.PL so NEG.have no sin in him,  
awyrpe se ærest ænne stan on hy  
cast.out.SBJ he first one stone on her  
'He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone  
at her.'  
(coaelhom,+AHom\_14:214.2117, c.990)
- (4) Soðlice [swa **hwar** swa Israhela bearn wæron], þar wæs  
Truly so where so Israel's children were, there was  
leoht.  
light  
'all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.'  
(cootest,Exod:10.23.2788, c.1050)

## OE free *wh*-relatives

Clause-final, optionally definite, *swa* optional

- (5) Fyres gecynd is þæt hit fornymð [swa hwæt swa him  
Fire.GEN nature is that it consumes so what so it.DAT  
gehende bið].  
near is  
'Fire's nature is that it consumes whatever is near it.'  
(cocathom1,+ACHom\_I,\_22:360.152.4446, c.990)
- (6) Gemyne, [hwæt Sanctus Paulus cwæð]  
Remember what Saint Paul said  
'Remember what Saint Paul said.'  
(cogregdC,GDPref\_and\_3\_[C]:15.207.28.2739, c.1075)
- ▶ Presence of *swa*, not position, determines interpretation.
  - ▶ *Swa*  $\approx$  *-ever* (von Fintel 2000, Truswell & Gisborne 2015), not really universal.

## Section 2

The first English headed *wh*-relatives



## Latent structural ambiguity

- ▶ OE could do this (apposition), because of clause-final position + maximizing free relative semantics:

(7) ... NP<sub>i</sub> ... FR<sub>i</sub>

- ▶ This always permits the following reanalysis:

(8) ... [NP ... t<sub>i</sub>] ... RC<sub>i</sub>

(9) þa cwæð ic to him, æteowe me [þa byrigeles [hwar ic þe  
Then said I to him show me the tomb where I you  
leigde]].

laid

'Then I said to him, "Show me the tomb where I laid you".'

Se Hælend me þa beo þære rihthand genam and me ut  
The Saviour me then by the right hand took and me out  
lædde [hwar ic hine byrede]

led where I him buried

'The Saviour then took me by the right hand and led me out to  
where I buried him' (conicodC,Nic\_[C]:149.161–2,c.1150)

## Syntactic and semantic evidence for reanalysis

- ▶ Syntactic embedding: [IP ... RC ...]
- ▶ Semantic embedding: referential dependency on inaccessible antecedent (under negation, universal, conditional, etc.).
- ▶ Gisborne & Truswell (2015): evidence for semantic embedding scattered throughout OE (esp. from 1000). Evidence for syntactic embedding from c.1200.

- (10) & gif him deoflu hwæt on heora geþance lære, [hwanon hi  
and if them devil what in their thought leave whereby they  
modigian magon oððe prutian], ne geþwærión hig þam,  
become.proud may or boast, NEG consent they him.DAT  
'And if the devil introduces anything into their thought, as a result of  
which they may become proud or boastful, they must not give in to  
him.' (cochdrul,ChrodR\_1:84.8.1101, c.1065)
- (11) þe eareste Pilunge [hwer of al þis uuel is] nis buten of prude.  
the first stripping where of all this evil is NEG.is but of pride  
'The first stripping, from where all this evil comes, is nothing but  
pride' (cmancriw-1,II.119.1506, c.1225)

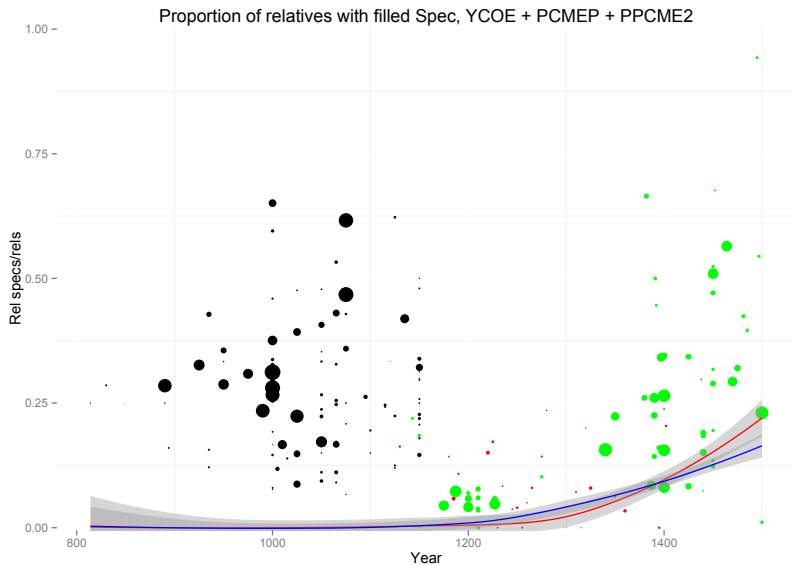
## Demonstrative and interrogative relatives

- ▶ OE used demonstrative phrases as specifiers of headed relatives.

(12) he is ure lif [on þam we lybbað & styriað]  
he is our life in DEM we live and move  
'He is our life, in whom we live and move.'  
(coaelhom,+AHom\_1:280.148, c.990)

- ▶ Demonstrative relatives largely disappeared with the collapse of case inflection c.1100.
- ▶ But *wh*-relatives weren't a direct replacement (Gisborne & Truswell 2016).
  - ▶ *where* and *there* coexisted for c.200 years.
  - ▶ Argumental *se*-relatives disappeared 100 years before argumental *wh*-relatives emerged.
- ▶ The first *wh*-relatives emerged in the low-frequency, low accessibility shadows.

# Demonstrative and interrogative relatives over time



Red = *wh*-rels, NP gaps; Blue = *wh*-rels, PP gaps.

## Section 3

### Early *which*-relatives

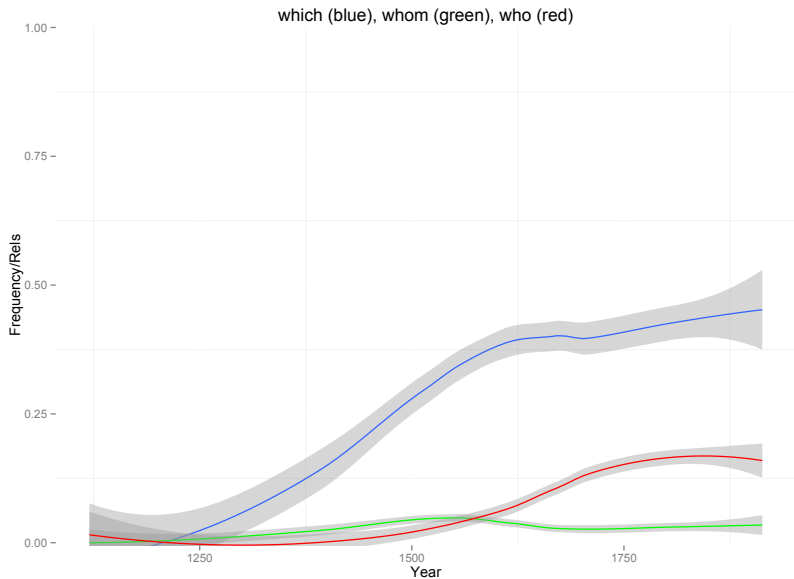
## *Wh*-relatives gather momentum

- ▶ *Wh*-relatives (mainly with PP gaps) were low-frequency until the early 14th century.
- ▶ They became much more noticeable with the emergence of *which*-relatives c.1350, quickly followed by *whom* and then *who*.

## Early *which/whom/who*-relatives

- (13) he is emperour of him-zelue. þet is of his bodye: and of  
he is emperor of himself that is of his body and of  
his herte. [huiche he demþ and halt ine guode payse]  
his heart which he deems and holds in good weight  
huerof he dep his wyl.  
whereof he does his will  
(cmayenbi-M2,85.1658, 1340)
- (14) But he [whom God hath sent], spekith the wordis of God  
but he whom God hath sent speaks the words of God  
(cmntest-M3,3,20J.234, c.1395)
- (15) This declaryth the Mayster of the storyes [who so lyste  
this declares the master of the stories who so wants  
to se it].  
to see it  
(cmfitzja-M4,A5R.71, 1495)

# The spread of *wh*-relatives





## Where do *which*-relatives come from?

- ▶ Three candidate factors in the emergence of *which*-relatives:
  1. Lexical diffusion: *which* starts to do what *wh*-relatives with PP gaps can do.
  2. Borrowing: *which* starts to do what *que* or *lequel* can do.
  3. Parallel change: *which* undergoes a series of reanalyses of free relative structures similar to those undergone by *where* etc., 200 years earlier.
- ▶ We can distinguish these factors because 14th-century *wh*-PP relatives  $\neq$  14th-century French *qu*-relatives  $\neq$  14th century free relatives.
- ▶ My claim: parallel change is the best fit for many of the facts.

## 14th century *wh*-PP relatives

- ▶ Formally distinct from free relatives (words like *whereby* only found in headed RCs and interrogatives);
- ▶ Clause-medial found from 1200 on.
- ▶ Increasing evidence for semantic subordination.

(16) þe eareste Pilunge [hwer of al þis uel is] nis buten  
the first stripping where of all this evil is NEG.is but  
of prude.  
of pride

(cmancriw-1, ll.119.1506, c.1225)

(17) hit is ybounde ine children and ine foles and yne wytlease  
it is abundant in children and in fools and in witless  
þet ne habbeþ nenne skele [huer-by hi conne chyese:  
that NEG have none skill whereby they can choose  
þet guode uram þe kueade].  
that good from the evil

(cmayenbi-M2, 86.1677, 1340)

## Early *which*-relatives $\neq$ PP-relatives

- ▶ First *which*-relatives are clause-final (extraposed if necessary); clause-medial examples start taking off c.50 years later.

(18) [our Lord \_\_\_] shul gladen in his werkes; [Pe which lokep to our Lord shal rejoice in his works the which looks to berpe and makep it to tremblen];  
the.earth and makes it to tremble  
(cmearlps-m2,127.5534, c.1350)

- ▶ *Which*-relatives resist semantic subordination: not used with *no*, *few*, etc.

(19) now haue y no frende ne kyn [bat / (\*)which me wil do eny now have I no friend nor kin that which me will do any maner goode].  
manner good  
(cmbrut3-M3,19.551, c.1400)

- ▶ Both these differences suggest that people didn't directly extend the *wh*-PP-relative part of their grammar to *which*-relatives.

## Middle French relatives?

- ▶ Closest similarity between Middle English and Middle French may be *lequel*.
- ▶ *The which* well-attested in English, with optional following N (also possible after *lequel*).

(20) How Kyng Arthure gaf bataile to þe Emperour, [in þe  
how King Arthur gave battle to the Emperor in the  
*whiche bataile* þe Emperoure was slayn].  
which battle the Emperor was slain  
(cmbrut3-M3,85.2588, c.1400)

- ▶ *Lequel* often used as appositive/continuative relative marker. Same for *the which*, particularly with following N.

(21) La xvje nouvelle, d' ung chevalier de Picardie, [*lequel* en Prusse  
the 16th tale of a knight of Picardy, the.which in Prussia  
s'en ala]  
went.away  
'The 16th tale, of a knight from Picardy, who went away to Prussia.'  
(anonyme\_cnn,4.142, 15th c.)

## Is this borrowing?

- ▶ Undeniable similarities between English and French constructions.
  - ▶ Internal structure;
  - ▶ Position in clause;
  - ▶ Interpretation.
- ▶ That's presumably why contact-based accounts of the emergence of *which*-relatives are so popular.
- ▶ And yet. . .
  - ▶ Clause-peripheral position  $\approx$  ME free relatives.
  - ▶ Optional N  $\approx$  ME free relatives.
  - ▶ Interpretation consistent with ME free relatives.
- ▶ Other salient aspects of the French system weren't borrowed (*qui*, *dont*, . . .).
- ▶ Emergence of *which*-relatives part of a broader reorganization of English *wh*-forms; the reorganization as a whole doesn't look like a contact phenomenon.

## 14th century free relatives with *which*

- ▶ If headed *which*-relatives emerged through spontaneous reanalysis parallel to the first headed *wh*-relatives, free relatives would once again provide the source construction.

(22) a. ... NP<sub>*i*</sub> ... FR<sub>*i*</sub>  $\rightsquigarrow$   
b. ... [NP ... *t<sub>i</sub>*] ... RC<sub>*i*</sub>

- ▶ Still clause-peripheral.
- ▶ Still maximizing (with or without *-ever-*interpretation).
- ▶ N optional after *which* and *what*.

(23) hem thynketh they been free, and han no juge,  
them thinks they be free and have no judge  
namoore than hath a free bole that taketh [**which**  
no.more than has a free bull that takes **which**  
**cow** that hym liketh in the town].  
cow that him pleases in the town

(cmctpars-M3,320.C1.1356, c.1390)

## Specialization in free relatives

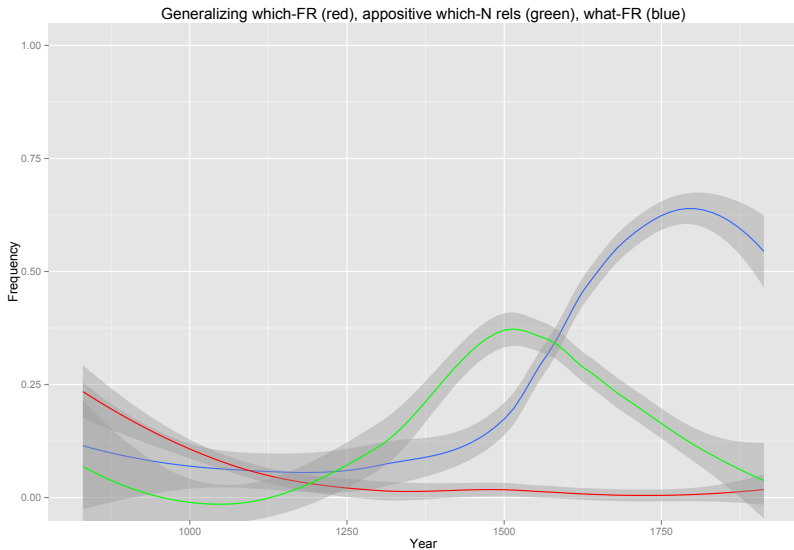
- ▶ In OE, *which* and *what* occurred in broadly the same types of free relatives (mainly generalizing arguments).

(24) [swa hwylc hus swa ge ingað], wuniað þar oð þæt ge  
so which house so you in.go stay there until that you  
utgan.  
out.go  
'In what place soever ye enter into an house, there abide till ye  
depart from that place'  
(cowsgosp,Mk\_[WSCp]:6.10.2569, c.1025)

(25) soðes ic þe sylle [swa hwæt swa þu me bitst], þeah þu  
truly I thee grant so what so you me ask though thou  
wylle healf min rice.  
will half my kingdom  
'Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the  
half of my kingdom' (cowsgosp,Mk\_[WSCp]:6.23.2594, c.1025)

- ▶ *Which* stopped being used in these functions and became a headed relative marker.
- ▶ *What* took them over and never spread to headed relatives.

# Specialization of *which* and *what*





## Consequences

- ▶ The change in question isn't just emergence of headed *which*-relatives.
- ▶ It's a shift in the specification of what *which* does.
- ▶ *Which* gains some new functions, and loses others.
- ▶ No-one (to my knowledge) blames such losses on contact.
- ▶ (Stories of contact-induced loss typically confined to morphological simplification, word order change).
- ▶ To the extent that the loss of generalizing *which*-FRs and emergence of appositive *which*-relatives are two sides of the same coin, the change has an endogenous aspect.
- ▶ (Retention of *which* N is a sign of a nonrestrictive interpretation: interpretation of N inside RC is a hallmark of maximizing relatives (Grosu & Landman 1998)).

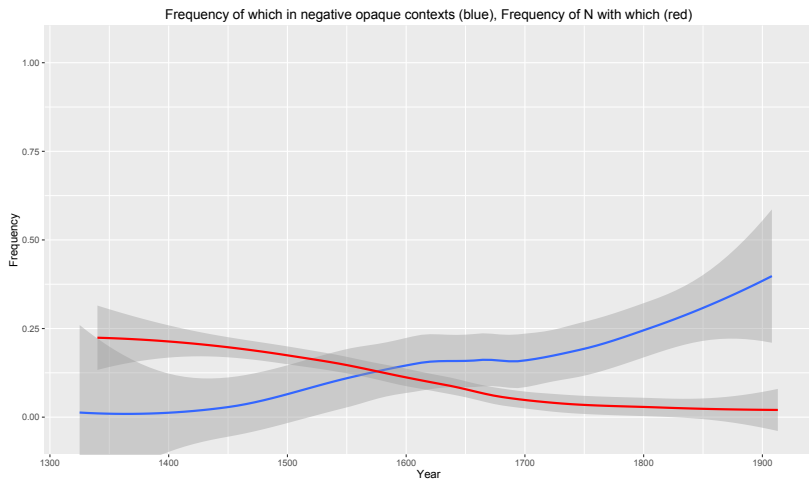
## Which changes: summary

- ▶ *Which* became a headed relativizer in two stages.
  1. Free relative  $\rightsquigarrow$  appositive (c.1300). Evidence:
    - ▶ abrupt shift in interpretation of *which*-rels,
    - ▶ loss of morphological indicators of FR status.
  2. Spread of restrictive *which*-relatives (gradually since 1300). Evidence:
    - ▶ decline of *Which N*,
    - ▶ increase in *which* in semantic subordination contexts.

(26) and anone he saw he was in a wylde mounteyne which was  
and soon he saw he was in a wild mountain which was  
closed with the se nyghe all aboute, that he myght se **no**  
closed with the sea nearby all about that he might see **no**  
**londe** aboute hym [which myghte releve hym], but wylde  
land about him which might relieve him but wild  
bestes.  
beasts

(cmmalory-M4,664.4760, 1470)

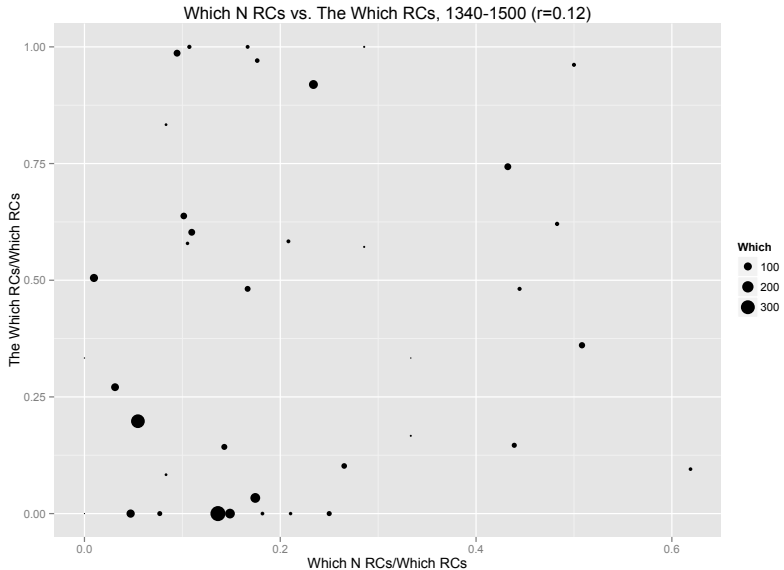
# The spread of restrictive *which*



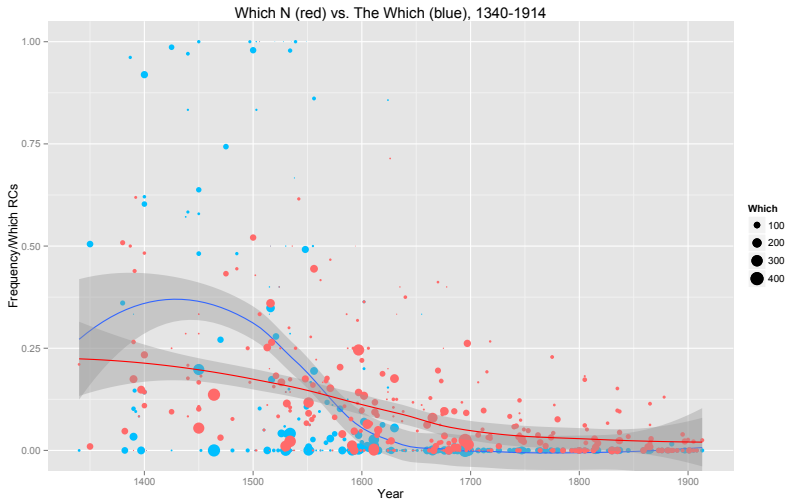
## The: French influence?

- ▶ None of the above touches the use of *the* in early *which*-relatives.
- ▶ Wide variability in frequency of *the which* relative to *which* and *which N*.
- ▶ No obvious interaction.
- ▶ No obvious semantic consequences of using *the which*.
- ▶ No correlation between frequency of *the which* and *which N*.
- ▶ Different diachronic trajectories.
- ▶ Maybe *the* is borrowed from French?

# Which N vs. The Which



# Which N vs. The Which: diachrony



## Which: summary

- ▶ Headed *which*-relatives emerged as a consequence of specialization of free relatives with *which* and *what*.
- ▶ Subsequent reanalyses: free rel  $\rightsquigarrow$  appositive  $\rightsquigarrow$  restrictive.
- ▶ This explains many aspects of the form and distribution of *which*-relatives across time, as well as aspects of their interpretation.
- ▶ Many of these properties are also shared by French *lequel*-relatives, but:
  - ▶ If you're going to borrow something from French, why this?
  - ▶ Contact is unlikely to have been responsible for **loss** of generalizing free *which*-relatives.
- ▶ No obvious account in the above terms for the diachronically independent phenomenon of *the which*, which may be a borrowing from French.

## Section 4

Conclusion, and prospects for extrapolating  
beyond English



## Parallel evolution on different scales

- ▶ Parallel evolution of headed relative specifiers is rampant in Indo-European.
- ▶ English and French *wh*-relatives emerged independently.
- ▶ English demonstrative and interrogative relative specifiers emerged independently.
- ▶ Even the first English headed *wh*-relatives and later *which*-relatives emerged independently.
  - ▶ They emerged from the same kind of source (free relatives).
  - ▶ The *which*-relatives which emerged were very similar to French, at a time of significant French influence, and details may even have been borrowed from French, but the construction as a whole was not.

## Prospects for areal explanations

- ▶ This doesn't mean that Comrie is wrong to see an areal characterization of headed *wh*-relatives.
- ▶ But it allows for a wider range of analyses in terms of what was transmitted areally, and when.
- ▶ If change among these constructions occurs in parallel, a language borrowing *any* antecedent construction may well have ended up with *wh*-relatives.

## Prospects for diachronic typology

- ▶ No reason to expect that all languages will follow the English trajectory from a similar starting point.
- ▶ Actuation clearly comes in many shapes and forms (Cruyff).
- ▶ Transmission probably conditioned by what else is possible in the language (e.g. diffusion of *wh*-relatives may be hindered by widespread use of demonstrative relatives).
- ▶ Next steps involve crosslinguistic comparison, especially with related languages where *wh*-relatives haven't become widespread.

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