

The reanalysis of *what* in the history of German looks like a correlative

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In this talk, I will focus on a peculiar and frequent type of construction of Old German known as the *so wh- so* construction, where a *wh*-pronoun is sandwiched between two *so*-s. I will show that in the majority of cases, these constructions are instances of correlatives, i.e. the clause is left-adjoined and resumed, in the matrix clause, by a demonstrative pronoun. I contend that this finding supports a new, economical view of the trajectory that leads *wh*-based pronouns – originally only interrogative/indefinite – to take over some of the relative functions previously belonging to demonstrative-based elements. In essence, *so wh- so* clauses undergo reanalysis from an ‘unconditional’, proposition-denoting type of correlative to the standard, property-denoting one, thus bridging the gap between interrogatives and relatives.