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Dating the Stylistic Turn

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Comedy

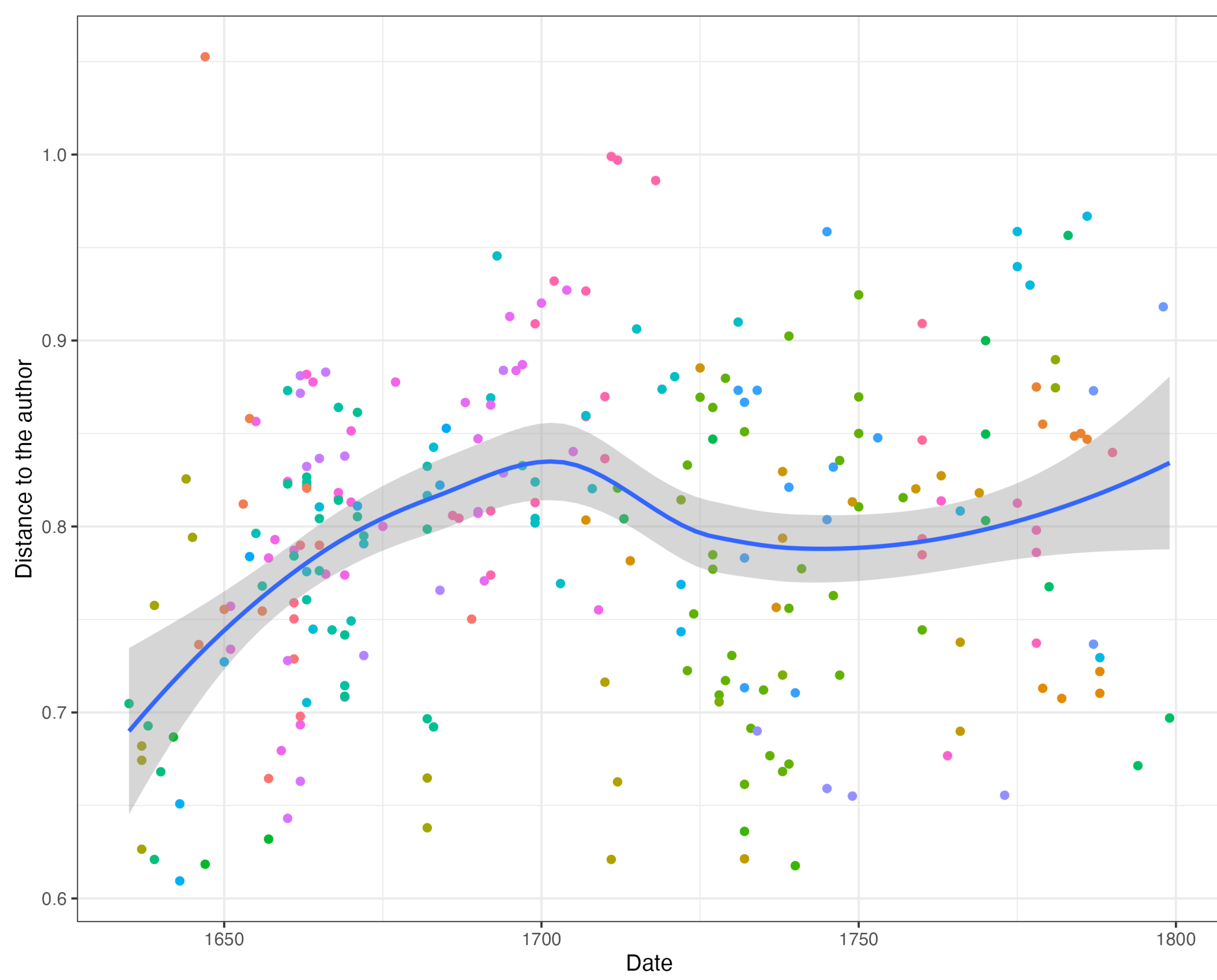


Figure 1. Distance between a comedy and the centroid of all the other comedies of the same author.

Tragedy

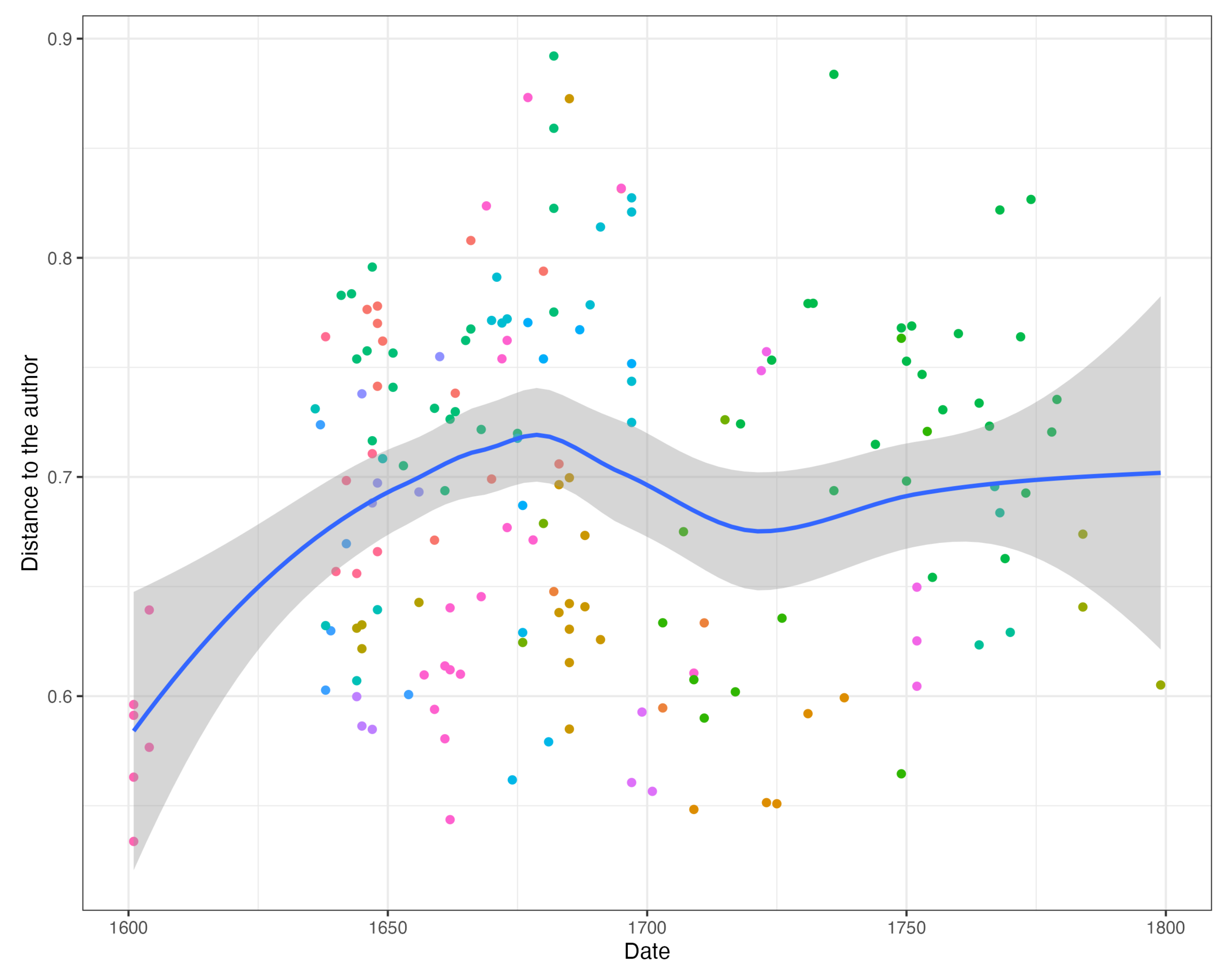


Figure 3. Distance between a tragedy and the centroid of all the other tragedies of the same author.

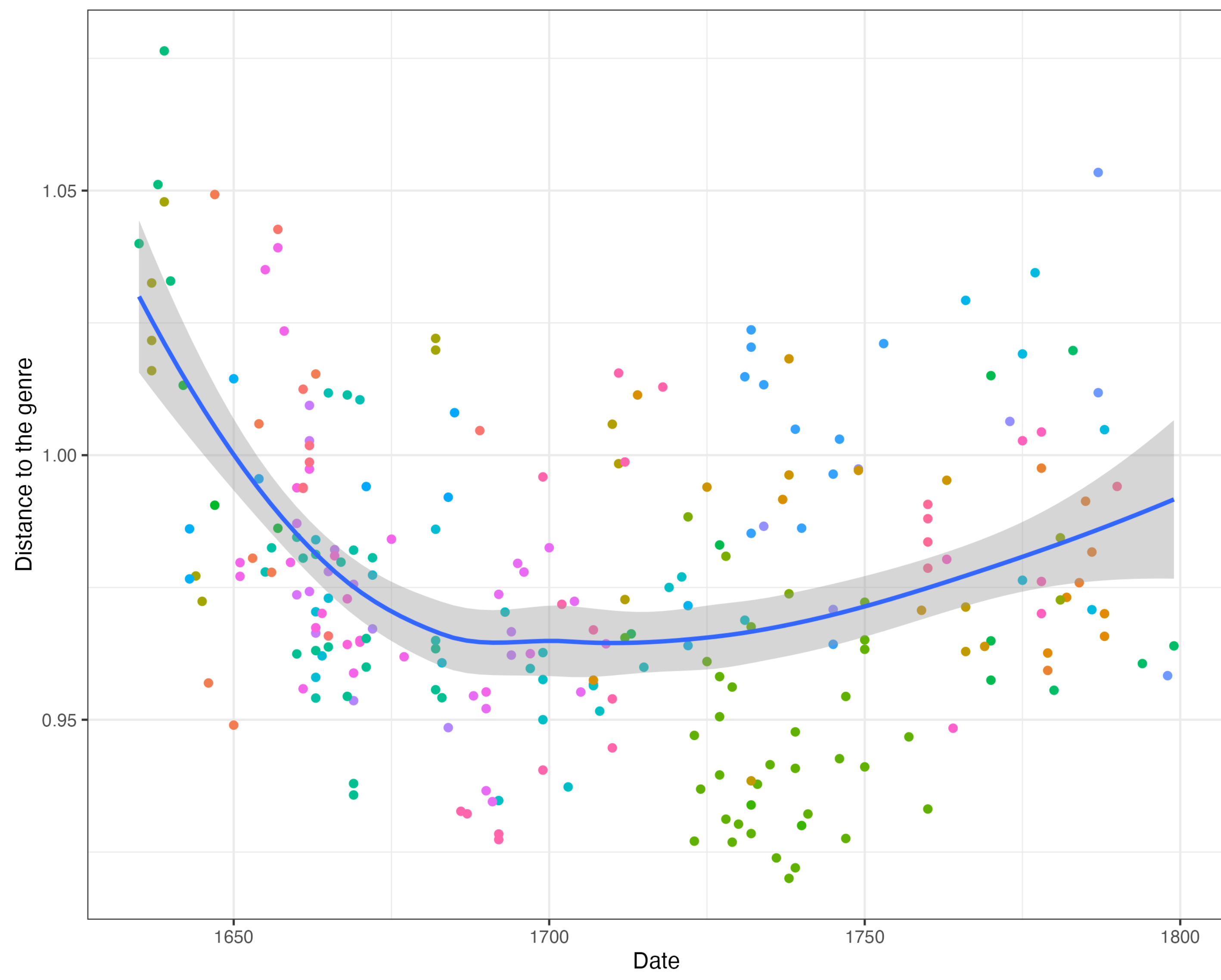


Figure 2. Distance between a play and the centroid of all comedies

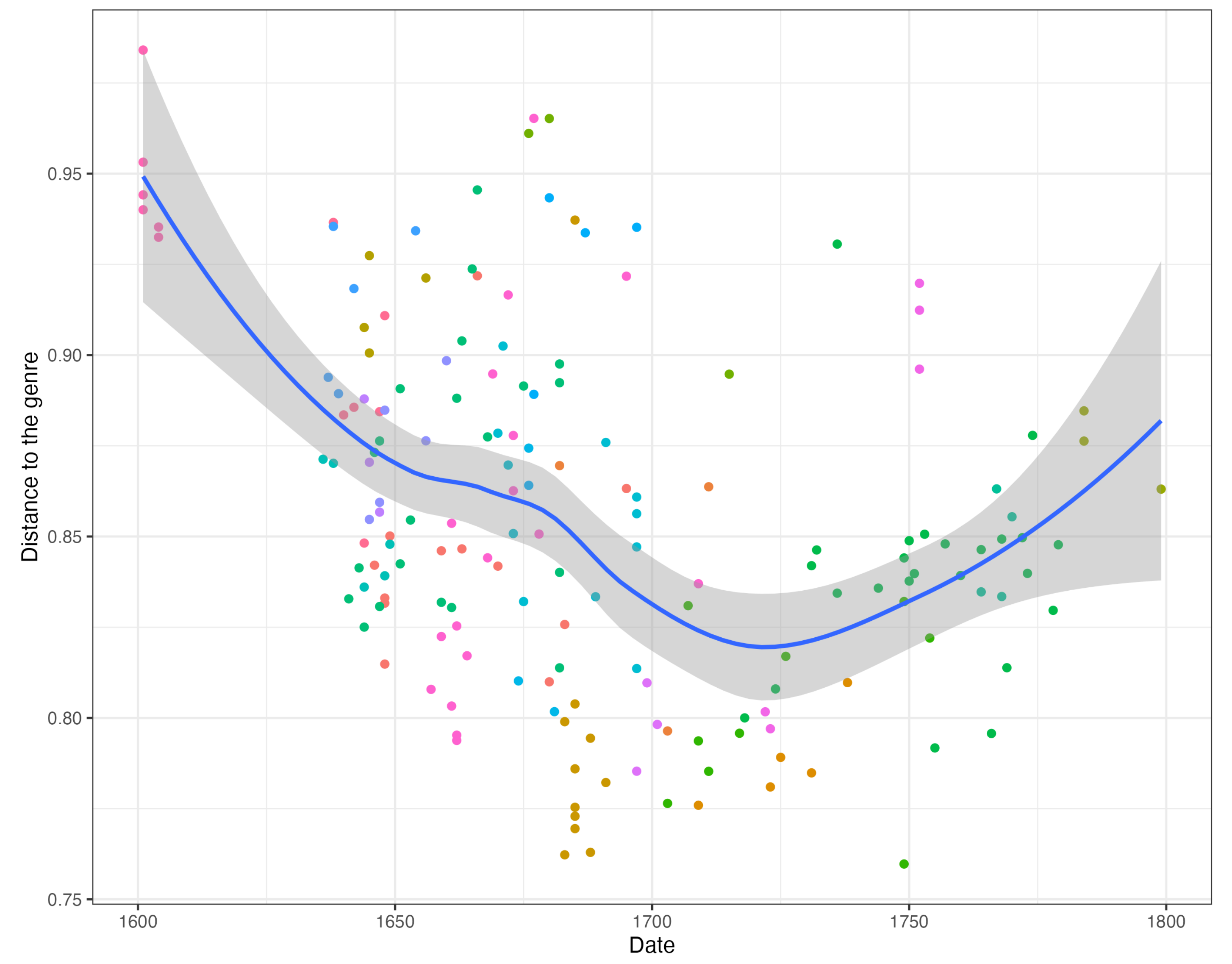


Figure 4. Distance between a play and the centroid of all tragedies

Context

Literary hypothesis

- According to stylisticians, transition from the *Belles-lettres* to *littérature* during the 19th century is characterised by the abandonment of the rhetorical model in favour of a new *langue littéraire*, placing the author more at the centre.
- We try to operationalise this theory, by measuring the pressure exerted by two opposing forces: (i) that of respecting the rules of the genre on the one hand, (ii) and that of the personal signature of the author on the other.

Corpus

- Plays from the *DraCor* corpus with substantial modifications and data cleaning (keywords, authors'ISNI identifier...).
- Only tragedies and comedies: all other plays (tragi-comedies, heroic comedies...) are not kept.
- Chronological range: 1620 - 1800.

Setup and conclusions

Computations

- Features: Normalised frequencies of character 3-grams (z-score + vector-length normalisation), but similar results are observed with most frequent words.
- Method: Distance to a centroid, i.e. the arithmetic mean position of a list of n points ($C = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n x_i$), in our case the normalised frequency of all the 3-grams.
- Experiments: computation of the distance of a play to (i) all the plays written by the same author, (ii) all the plays belonging to the same genre.

Results We discover a similar trend, organised in three phases:

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
	Divergence	Convergence	Convergence
Distance to the author	↗	↘	↗
Distance to the genre	↘	↘ or →	↗