

Agnieszka Kocel
University of Warsaw

PALATALIZATION IN GRAMMATICAL WORDS AS REFLECTED IN UNCLASSIFIED LATE MIDDLE ENGLISH SOURCES

Abstract

Although palatalization changing [k] into [tʃ] was most widespread in Southumbria, the previous examination (Kocel 2009, 2010) has already proved that on no account can it be perceived as a homogeneous process. This lack of consistency is reflected in many instances of palatal forms found in the North alongside many nonpalatal ones encountered in the East Midlands and London. Consequently, the substantial number of such “odd” forms seems to defy the existence of clear-cut boundaries between the above mentioned areas, allowing for an unhindered influx and amalgamation of ostensibly dialect-specific variants. The problem appears even more complex, taking into account the vast collection of dialectally unidentified Middle English texts which, containing both palatal and nonpalatal forms, only corroborate the fact that palatalization could not be dialect or even area specific. The multitude of variants present in those texts, a result of the Scandinavian influence and dialectal borrowing, point to the process of the lexical diffusion of these forms across the whole English territory, affecting in particular such high-frequency items as the grammatical words *each*, *much*, *such* and *which*. The aim of the study, thus, will be to determine the extent of palatalization affecting these grammatical words, through the analysis of the spelling/phonological discrepancies and the distribution of *each*, *much*, *such* and *which* in unclassified Late Middle English sources. The data come from the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose*, *The Middle English Dictionary* and *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English*.

1. Textual material

The current brief study concentrates on five texts from the *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose*, all dated to the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries. The list includes (a) *Book of Quintessence* classified as a cycle of treatises on

mediaeval medicine, (b) *Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, educational fiction and a morality fable, (c) *English Gilds*, consisting of legal ordinances and charters, (d) *Prose Life of Alexander* considered a historical romance and (e) *Testament of Love* classified as a “court of love” piece of writing. All the above are labelled in the corpus with an [x] signifying an ‘unknown’ original dialect, potentially a variegated mixture of features with a probable dominance of some variants.

The following two sections, thus, will contain an analysis of these texts as regards the grammatical words affected by palatalization in order to establish to what extent this process influenced their linguistic homogeneity.

2. Palatalization-consistent texts

One of the texts which could serve as an example of dialectal consistency with respect to palatalization is the *Book of Quintessence*, containing all four grammatical words observable only in their palatal forms as demonstrated in Figures 1 and 2:

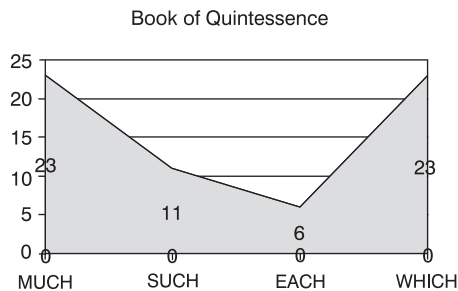


Fig. 1 The quantitative representation

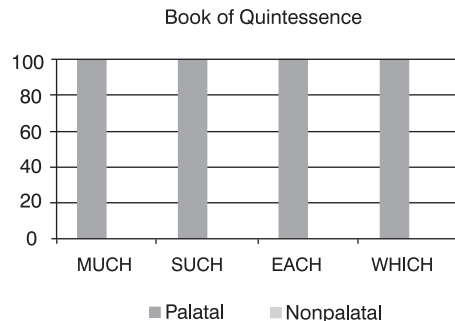


Fig. 2 The percentages of palatal of *much*, *such*, *each* and *which* and nonpalatal forms

Figure 1 above displays the grammatical words from the *Book of Quintessence* in the order of their frequency of occurrence: *much* (23), *which* (23), *such* (11) and *each* (6), all exhibiting only palatalized forms. The data concerning types of these forms, together with the percentages and numbers of their tokens (in parentheses) are summarized in Table 1:

Table 1. The distribution of palatal forms (percentages)

Book of Quintessence			
MUCH	SUCH	EACH	WHICH
myche 91.3 (21) miche 8.7 (2)	siche 45.5 (5) sich 45.5 (5) suche 9.0 (1)	ech 50 (3) euerych 50 (3)	þe which 65.2 (15) þe whiche 17.4 (4) which 13.0 (3) whiche 4.3 (1)
(23)	(11)	(6)	(23)

Table 1 confirms that the *Book of Quintessence* is, to a high degree, also homogeneous in the use of the particular variants, favouring *myche*, *sich(e)* and *which(e)* with the Old English definite article *þe*. Any changes in the forms result only from minor vowel alternations, final *-e* elision, presence or absence of the determiner or the compounding with *euer-*. As for their distribution, the text does not seem to be systematic in the choice of the palatal forms, applying them injudiciously, as seen in the example below:

- (1) (...) and to schewe **euerych** of þe forseid þing bi hem silf; and þat is ri3t merueylous. I wole not leue for a litil to schewe a greet secreet, how 3e may drawe out þe 5 beynge of **ech** of þe 4 elementis of al þe þing rehersed afore (...) (*Book of Quintessence*, p. 12)

Such a literary source, however, can hardly be perceived as representative of the group, one reason being its limited length, which makes it essential to examine a few typologically similar texts to draw any further conclusions.

3. Palatalization-inconsistent texts

In order to broaden the spectrum of the data “unknown” as to their origin, the following material includes the four other texts, namely *Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, *English Gilds*, *Prose Life of Alexander* and *Testament of Love* which, due to the comparative nature of the current analysis, will be first examined with respect to the quantitative balance of the grammatical words (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 shows that all four texts exhibit a slightly different balance of the grammatical words, with the *Gesta Romanorum* presenting the numerically determined order of *which*, *much*, *such* and *each*, *English Gilds*, of *each*, *which*, *such* and *much*, *Prose Life of Alexander*, of *which*, *each*, *much* and *such* and *Testament of Love*, of *which*, *such*, *much* and *each*. Interestingly, the

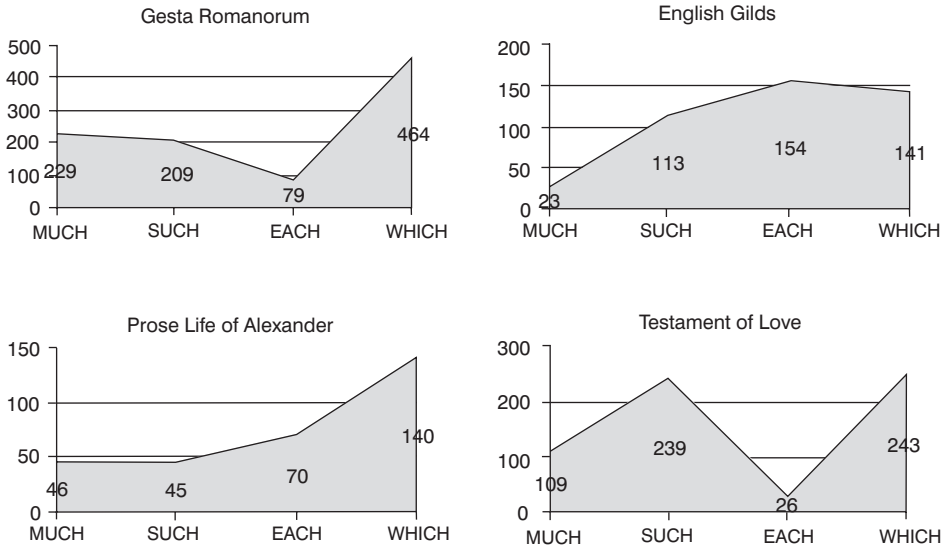


Fig. 3 The quantitative representation of *much*, *such*, *each*, *which* in *Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, *English Gilds*, *Prose Life of Alexander* and *Testament of Love*

pronoun *which* seems to show the highest or almost the highest frequency in all the sources, which may affect the statistical results regarding palatalization and its range of influence. Figure 4 is a visualization of the extent of the process.

As can be inferred from the data above, none of the texts proves to be absolutely homogeneous with respect to palatalization, although the most consistent here appears to be the *Gesta Romanorum* with uniformly palatal variants (100%) of *such*, *each* and *which* and nonpalatal variants merely in *much*, with 12.2% of nonpalatal forms vs. 87.8% of palatal ones. The other three sources exhibit a varied palatal : nonpalatal ratio which in *English Gilds* and the *Prose Life of Alexander*, at least demonstrates consistency as to the quantitative preferences of either palatal or nonpalatal forms respectively. In this sense, the *Testament of Love* seems totally heterogeneous and quite unpredictable as regards the favoured variants and their use. The palatal : nonpalatal variation in other texts is as follows:

- (a) *English Gilds*: *much* (82.6% vs. 17.4%), *such* (99.3% vs. 0.7%), *each* (70.8% vs. 29.2%), *which* (99.3% vs. 0.7%);
- (b) the *Prose Life of Alexander*: *much* (0% vs. 100%), *such* (2.2% vs. 97.8%), *each* (4.3% vs. 95.7%), *which* (2.1% vs. 97.9%);

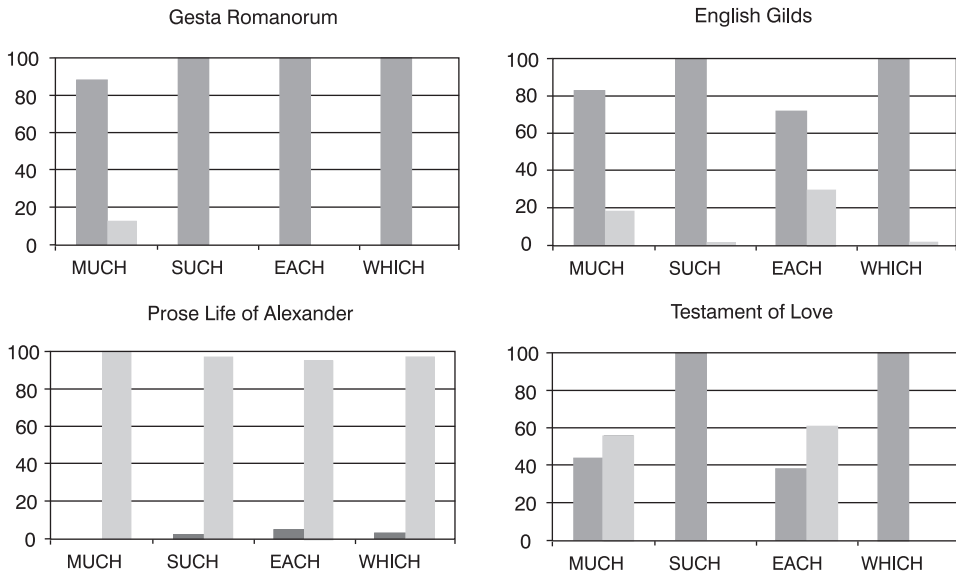


Fig. 4 The percentages of palatal and nonpalatal forms in *Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum, English Gilds, Prose Life of Alexander and Testament of Love*

(c) the *Testament of Love*: *much* (44% vs. 56%), *such* (100% vs. 0%), *each* (38.5% vs. 61.5%), *which* (100% vs. 0%).

Out of all four word groups, the grammatical items proving the most consistent as to the type of forms used seem *such* and *which*, both generally favouring palatal variants. Considering the high frequency especially of *which*, it may contribute to the seemingly high dominance of such palatal forms and thus specific phonological tendencies in the text.

To understand the particularity of these tendencies, it is crucial, however, to take into account the specific forms employed in each text, which have been collated, together with their percentages and the number of tokens (in parenthesis) in the table below. The table also registers the noun *mekilness* in the *Prose Life of Alexander* which, however, has been excluded from the quantitative analysis.

Table 2. The distribution of palatal and nonpalatal forms in *Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, *English Gilds*, *Prose Life of Alexander* and *Testament of Love*

MUCH	SUCH	EACH	WHICH
Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum			
moche 41.0 (94) muche 24.9 (57) mych 10.0 (23) moch 9.6 (22) mekell 8.7 (20) mekill 2.6 (6) much 1.3 (3) myche 0.9 (2) mekille 0.4 (1) mekylle 0.4 (1)	such 37.9 (79) swiche 29.7 (62) suche 24.9 (52) swich 6.2 (13) sweche 0.5 (1) siche 0.5 (1) sich 0.5 (1)	eche 59.5 (47) echon 17.7 (14) ech 17.7 (14) echone 1.3 (1) euerychone 1.3 (1) ich 1.3 (1) iche 1.3 (1)	the whiche 26.7 (124) þe which 24.8 (115) the which 22.4 (104) þe whiche 9.1 (42) which 8.0 (37) whiche 5.0 (23) the wiche 2.2 (10) w[h]iche 0.6 (3) w[h]ich 0.4 (2) þe wiche 0.4 (2) wiche 0.2 (1) þe wich 0.2 (1)
(229)	(209)	(79)	(464)
English Gilds			
moche 34.8 (8) meche 13.0 (3) mikil 8.7 (2) asmoche 8.7 (2) much 8.7 (2) mechil 4.3 (1) mekil 4.3 (1) mekul 4.3 (1) in-so-much 4.3 (1) myche 4.3 (1) mych 4.3 (1)	suche 45.0 (51) such 44.0 (50) soche 4.4 (5) swych 2.7 (3) swiche 1.8 (2) swich 0.9 (1) swilk 0.9 (1)	euerych 20.8 (32) eueriche 19.5 (30) ilk 8.4 (13) eche 7.8 (12) ilke 7.1 (11) euerich 5.8 (9) euerilk 5.2 (8) iche 5.2 (8) eueryche 4.5 (7) euerilke 3.9 (6) ech 2.6 (4) euer-iche 1.9 (3) euere-ilk 1.3 (2) euerilk 1.3 (2) euerylk 0.6 (1) euere-iche 0.6 (1) euerich 0.6 (1) euere-ilk 0.6 (1) oueriche 0.6 (1) ych 0.6 (1) ylk 0.6 (1)	which 24.1 (34) whiche 12.8 (18) wch 9.9 (14) the which 9.2 (13) quiche 4.3 (6) qwiche 4.3 (6) the whiche 4.3 (6) qwich 3.5 (5) qwyche 3.5 (5) whych 2.8 (4) weche 2.8 (4) wiche 2.1 (3) wych 2.1 (3) the wheche 1.4 (2) the wiche 1.4 (2) wheche 1.4 (2) qweche 0.7 (1) qwicheuer 0.7 (1) the qwilk 0.7 (1) wicch 0.7 (1) wyche 0.7 (1) the wheche 0.7 (1) the whech 0.7 (1) þe which 0.7 (1) þe whiche 0.7 (1)

(23)	(113)	(154)	the wech 0.7 (1) weche 0.7 (1) þe wache 0.7 (1) ye whiche 0.7 (1) ye which 0.7 (1)
Prose Life of Alexander			
mekill 93.5 (43) mekell 2.2 (1) ouermekill 2.2 (1) mekills 2.2 (1) [mekilness]	swilke 62.2 (28) swilk 13.3 (6) swylke 13.3 (6) swylk 4.4 (2) suylke 4.4 (2) such 2.2 (1)	ilke 50.- (35) ilk 21.4 (15) ilkan 17.1 (12) ilkane 5.7 (4) each 4.3 (3) euer-ilkanne 1.4 (1)	þe whilke 66.4 (93) whilke 17.9 (25) þe whilk 5.0 (7) whilk 3.6 (5) the whilke 3.6 (5) which 2.1 (3) thee whilke 0.7 (1) the whilk 0.7 (1)
(46)	(45)	(70)	(140)
Testament of Love			
mokel 43.1 (47) moche 36.7 (40) mikel 6.4 (7) mokil 5.5 (6) moch 2.8 (3) in-as-moche 1.8 (2) mikil 0.9 (1) moche-folde 0.9 (1) for-as-moch 0.9 (1) for-as-moche 0.9 (1)	suche 88.3 (211) such 11.3 (27) sucbi 0.4 (1)	ilke 61.5 (16) everich 23.1 (6) everiche 15.4 (4)	whiche 81.9 (199) which 16 (39) the whiche 1.6 (4) whicche 0.4 (1)
(109)	(239)	(26)	(243)

As Table 2 demonstrates, all four texts show slightly different preferences for the forms of the grammatical words and varying frequencies of their use. The most frequent palatal variants seem *moche*, *such(e)*, *eche*, *euerich(e)* and *which(e)*, whereas nonpalatal ones include *mekil(l)*, *swilk(e)*, *ilke(e)* and *þe whilke*. The main discrepancies between the variants stem from vowel and consonant alternation, presence or absence of final [-e], geminates [ll] and [nn], variation in the initial cluster of [qw-], [qu-], [wh] and [w], occurrence of the determiner *the/þe/ye* before *which*, spelling variation, compounding (with initial *euer-*, *ever-*, *ouer-*, *(in-)as-*, *for-as-*, *in-so-*, or final *on(e)*, *-an(n)(e)*, *-euer* and *-folde*) and, evidently, palatalization affecting here all the word groups. The table also registers some interesting forms such as *mokel*, *mokil*, *mekills*, *sucbi*, *wicth* accounted for in neither LALME nor

MED and representing some accidental and unintended spelling variation as in the case of the last three examples or a deliberate change in the word form observable in the first two variants.

Even more interesting issue concerns the distribution of palatal and nonpalatal forms across the texts themselves. Although the *Gesta Romanorum* gives an impression of consistency regarding the employment of the variants, it also reveals some noticeable traces of exterior influences. Its first part is dominated by only palatal forms, with *moche* occupying pages up to 95, then yielding to *muche* and for some reason appearing again together with the latter on page 117. The neat order seems to break down from page 312 onwards where both palatal *moche* and nonpalatal *mekill* begin to alternate, but still not in a close vicinity of each other. The situation gets more complicated from page 361 onwards where *muche* changes into *mych* and is used alongside *mekill* up to page 417 where both forms suddenly appear right next to each other. Obviously, due to the fact that other grammatical words exhibit only palatal tokens, the nonpalatal forms of *much* occur together with the latter throughout the whole text, which is demonstrated in the examples below:

- (2a) (...) the byshope **mych** worshipped the Eyre, for he desyred **mekill** the maner. he made this Eyre to sitte with hym at his borde, in mete tyme, and did hym **mych** worship; (*Gesta Romanorum*, p. 417)
- (b) (...) wherfore **suche** one oweth **mekell** to sorow, and alway wepe. The keper of the prison is the develle, that **suche** one hathe sette faste (...) (*Gesta Romanorum*, p. 336)

A slightly different scheme can be drawn for *English Gilds* where the nonpalatal variants seem to occupy the first part of the text (pages 46–117), with only *mikil* appearing twice at its end, and are interspersed with occasional palatal forms, especially of *each*, which, however, occur in the close vicinity of each other merely in a few cases, as seen in the example below:

- (3) (...) if ye Deen falie of his somouns, he shal paye, for **ilk** a broyere and sistere nouht somound, to ye amendement of ye li3t, j.d And also ordeynd it is, yat **ueriche** broyere and sistere shal paie, at **ueriche** morunspeche, (...) (*English Gilds*, p. 103)

Still, a dramatically opposite situation is presented in the *Prose Life of Alexander* where the few palatal variants are found on only three pages, from 46 to 48, and are not accompanied by their nonpalatal equivalents. The latter are evenly interspersed across the rest of the text, without much care as to the consistency of their choice, though, as indicated by the examples below:

- (4a) And Alexander, seeing them with **each** other in talk, knew they were speaking of him and he was known.(...) And taking a blazing torch from a Persian's hand, himself mounted his palfrey, **which** he found ready out side (...) (*Prose Life of Alexander*, p. 47)
- (b) Now may þou see that þou lye3, And þare-fore þou arte worthy to hafe **swilke** a dede.' And than Anectanabus ansuerd, & said: 'I wyste wele ynoghe,'quoþ he, 'þat I scholde die **swylke** a dede. (*Prose Life of Alexander*, p. 8)

On the other hand, the *Testament of Love* shows an even distribution of both types of variants across the whole text, with palatal and nonpalatal *much* existing alongside each other, accompanied by the palatal *which* and *such*, due to the lack of their nonpalatal counterparts, as well as palatal and nonpalatal *each*. Curiously, while *much* allows for the alternation of its both equivalents, sometimes even in the same line, *each* seems to be used more consciously, favouring the employment of either its palatal or nonpalatal forms and not juxtaposing them against one another. This situation is illustrated by the examples below:

- (5a) (...) in ful of thoughty studye to plesaunce, mater in bringinge comfort **everiche** to other. And therefore, of erthly thinges, **mokel** mater lightly cometh in your lerning. (*Testament of Love*, p. 78)
- (b) After **moche** clatering, there is **mokil** rowning. (*Testament of Love*, p. 23)

The configuration of the grammatical words displayed in all four texts contributes to the complexity of palatalization, showing hardly any regularities in the application of the process and therefore defying any conscious use of the variants on the part of the writers themselves, representing either a stylistic device or their linguistic awareness. This, in turn, only confirms the assumption made earlier that if even texts unidentified as to their place of origin and speech variety point to the unpredictability and inconsistency of palatalization, the whole phonological phenomenon cannot be perceived as dialect or even area bound, thus challenging the concept of any linguistic boundaries and justifying the free circulation of all the dialectal forms.

4. Conclusions

1. Although the corpus registers some linguistically homogeneous texts, the presence of other dialectally unidentified sources defying homogeneity with respect to palatalization, testifies to a much more complex character of the process.

2. Out of the five texts chosen for the analysis, four exhibit both palatal and nonpalatal forms, with a varied ratio of their occurrences, depending on the source.

3. The most frequent palatal forms encountered in all five texts are *moche*, *myche*, *such(e)*, *which(e)*, *ech(e)* and *euerich(e)*, while the nonpalatal ones include *mekil(l)*, *swilk(e)*, *ilk(e)* and *þe whilke*.

4. The grammatical word with the highest frequency of use seems *which*, proving also the most consistent in the employment of its either palatal or nonpalatal variants. On the other hand, as regards types of tokens within the palatal or nonpalatal group, this grammatical word generally exhibits the broadest variety of forms across both categories.

5. The texts also contain variants not accounted for in either LALME or MED and these include *mokel*, *mokil*, *mekills*, *sucbi* and *wicth*.

6. The occurrence of both palatal and nonpalatal forms alongside each other proves the lack of consistency and homogeneity of the phonological process, also in the case of dialectally unidentified sources.

7. The unpredictable and heterogeneous character of palatalization in the texts of obscure origin only corroborates the assumption that the phenomenon cannot be dialect or even area specific, accounting for the unhindered diffusion of dialectal words across the merely conventional boundaries.

REFERENCES:

- Chambers, J.K. – Peter Trudgill,
1980 *Dialectology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kocel, Agnieszka
2009 “Much, such and each: k-palatalization and distribution of (non)palatal forms in Northern Middle English”. [In:] Jerzy Wełna (ed.) *Explorations in the English Language* (= *Anglica* 18) (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego), 7–22.
- 2010 “Nonpalatalized dorsals in Southumbrian Middle English grammatical words: a Scandinavian influence?”. [In:] Jacek Fisiak (ed.) *Studies in Old and Middle English (Warsaw Studies in English Language and Literature 1)*. (Łódź: Społeczna Wyższa Szkoła Przedsiębiorczości i Zarządzania), 165–182.
- Markus, M. (ed.)
2008 *Innsbruck Corpus of Middle English Prose* (version 2.3). Innsbruck: University of Innsbruck.
- McIntosh, Angus – Michael Samuels – Michael Benskin (eds.)
1986 *A Linguistic Atlas of Late Mediaeval English* (= LALME). Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press.

- McSparran, Frances (ed.)
2001 *The Middle English Dictionary* (= MED) Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan.
- Venezky, R.L. – S. Butler (eds.)
1980 *A Microfiche Concordance to Old English. The High-Frequency Words.* Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies.