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Labour *into* Travel *and* Travel *into* Labour*:* *a journey into the semantic field of hard work*

1. *Introduction*

During the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern times, English vocabulary witnessed an extraordinary increase and a multi-layered restructuring due to an impressive wave of loanwords, especially from French and Latin. As is well known, this phenomenon concerned in particular those lexical areas deeply enriched by the encounter with French culture and strongly influenced by the prestige of Latin (Winford, 2003; Thomason, 2010; Skaffari, 2012), such as, for instance, religion, church, administration, building, arts, clothing, literature and science (Schendl, 2012), but not exclusively. An apparent exception is the semantic field related to the concept of '(hard) work' and its corresponding effect, that is 'fatigue'.

In Old English (henceforth OE), besides the semantically generic hyperonym (*ge-*)*weorc*, a variety of words denoted either different ways or facets of working hard. They are mainly deverbal nouns – *swat*, *geswing*, *geswinc*, *gewinn*, *gedeorf* – which, as one may expect, express the manner in which work is done, while emphasis on the effects of work is made explicit by the use of nouns such as *earfoþ* 'hardship' and *broc* 'affliction' to refer to working and/or works. All these terms, however, nowadays are either rare or archaic, or have disappeared altogether, because, in the course of the Middle English (henceforth ME) and Early Modern English (henceforth EME) periods, they were replaced by French loans: *travail*, *labour*, *toil*, attested from the fourteenth century, *effort*, first used by Caxton, *fatigue* from the seventeenth century among less common ones – and later Latin-based formations, such as *exertion* (< Lat. *exsertus)*. Irrespective of their Present Day English meanings, these three lexical items – *travail*, *labour*, *toil* – entered the ME lexicon, both as nouns and as verbs, to encode (physical and mental) hard work of laborious or painful nature (carried out with great exertion or

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effort), but they could also be used, as verbs, to indicate difficult or laborious motion, and, as nouns, the effort and pain of childbirth. The end of the story is well known: they became semantically distinct. The French loans *travail* and *travailen* specialised in the field of journey, while *labour* as a verb and as a noun maintained the general meaning of exerting oneself physically or mentally (with inevitable semantic applications and developments according to the context of usage), especially in connection with agriculture and childbirth, and *toil*/*toilen* kept and reinforced the idea of struggling in intensive labour and its consequences. Much less is known about how or why the story ended this way. The divergent semantic change of the verb *travail* has been the topic of a recent paper by Huber (2021), who explained it within the framework of construction grammar as a product of the different intransitive motion constructions. The semantic differentiation of *travail*, however, is attested first when it is used as a noun and only later as a verb (see *OED* and *MED*, s.v), as should be expected since Romance borrowings first entered in their nominal form and use, and only later as predicates (Durkin, 2014: 269-280).

After a short introduction on the OE terminology, the present paper analyzes the use of the nouns *travail* and *labour* and demonstrates that their semantic specialization could be triggered by the partial or total overlapping in usage of their corresponding verbs.

2. *Working hard in Old English*

In OE, the hyperonym (*ge*)*weorc* ‘work, deed’, but also ‘pain, travail’, that could be caused by working (see ex. 1), was enriched by several deverbal nouns whose link to its semantic field is further confirmed by the fact they often gloss the Latin word *labor*. According to *A Thesaurus of Old English* (Roberts & Kay, 2000: 699), the notion of hard work could be expressed by deverbal nouns, such as (*ge*)-*deorf*, *swat*, (*ge*)s*winc*, (*ge*)s*wing*, and (*ge*)*winn*, and by the two nouns *broc* and *earfoðe*, especially in reference to laborious efforts and toil resulting from the act of working.

(1) þæt he þæs gewinnes weorc þrowade (Beow. 1721)[1]
[that he suffered the pain of the struggle]

[1] For all examples drawn from OE, texts are cited from and according to the norms of *DOE* and *DOE Corpus*.

The word-formations from predicates could be either *nomina actionis* or *nomina rei actae*: in the former case, they expressed the manner in which the act of working was carried out; in the latter, what such an act produced. Thus *swat* evoked *sweating*, that is, what often happens when exerting one's body, and thus, metonymically, the action itself. *Swat* was often used in combination with *gewin* (ex. 2), which could also refer to both 'labour, toil' and their fruits, as derived from an original meaning of fighting and struggling (cf. ex. 1), and therefore emphasizing the idea of the physical exertion necessarily to carry out the task.

(2) Se man on gewinne and on swate he leofaþ (HomS 17 (Bl. Hom. 5) 100)
[the man liveth in toil and with the sweat (of his labour)]

Gewin often translated Lat. *labor* – e.g. et plurimum eonun, labor et dolor / *ealle þe þaer ofer beoð aefre getealde, wintra on worulde, þa, beoð gewinn and sar* (PPs. 89.11) – which also found valid correspondents in *geswing*[2] and *geswinc*, especially when the idea of 'labour, exercise, fatigue' and the inevitable side effect of 'trouble, affliction, tribulation' was implied – e.g. *geswing is beforan me* (PsGIF (Kimmens) 72.16) which recalled *labor est ante me* of Augustine's *Confessiones* (11.22.28). The synonymic relation between *geswinc*, *gewin* and *weorc* seems to be undeniable, if one looks at their compounds, for instance, with *hand-* to express both manual labour (Lat. *labor manuum*) and handiworks (Lat. *opus manuum*, *manufactum*): *hand-weorc*, *hand-geswinc*, and *hand-gewin*.

Also *gedeorf* was connected to the idea of labour, especially manual labour, as well as tribulation, toil and affliction, both in performing the act and in itself (ex. 3b). Like the other words belonging to the same semantic field (ex. 3a), it represented a semantic calque of Lat. *labor*[3].

(3) a. […] geseoh eaðmodnysse mine & geswinc ł gedeorf min & forlæt ł forgif ealle gyltas mine *vide humilitatem meam et laborem meum et dimitte uniuersa delicta mea* (PsGlI (Lindelöf) 24.18)

[2] The relationship between the *nomen actionis* (*swing*) and the predicate (*geswingan*) is quite opaque. The verb is more frequently associated with the idea of Lat. *flagellum*, coherently with its predicate meaning 'to whip, strike'.

[3] It is the *nomen actionis* of (*ge*)*deorfan*, an intransitive strong verb, derived from the Proto-Indoeuropean *d^{h}erHb^{h}- 'to work, perish, die' and related to Lith. *dìrbu*, *dìrbti* 'to work' and Lith. *dárbas* 'work' (Orel, 2003: 71; Kroonen, 2013: 93). Among the other Germanic languages, the stem is not highly attested, but in the Middle phase: OFris *far-derva*, MLG *vor-dewen* 'to step down', MHG *ver-derben* 'to die, to pass away', and ME *derfen* 'to afflict, harass, torture, harm' and 'to damage and hurt' (*MED*, s.v. *derfen*).

(ABJ forms of *gewinn*, CDFGHK forms of *geswinc*, E *gewin vel swinc*).
[Look upon my humiliation and labour, and forgive me all my sins]

(3) b. *quid tunc mihi proficit labor meus?* hwæt þænne me fremode gedeorf min? (ÆColl 163)
[How then can I make a profit from my work?]

If deverbal nouns denoting hard work usually imply being in a state of some sort of suffering and affliction, this also holds true for those terms derived from nominal roots, such as *broc* that primarily translated Lat. *labor, adversitas, adflictio* ('affliction', 'laborious effort'), and *earfoðe*, which expressed 'labour' and 'tribulation, affliction', translating Lat. *tribolatio*[4], as well as 'pains, trouble of laborious work', but was also used to indicate 'bodily pain' and in particular 'labour of childbirth'. Their attestation in literary works derived directly or indirectly from Latin originals makes it possible to pinpoint those different semantic nuances, as in (4a.) and (4b.), drawn respectively from the OE translations of Orosius's *Historia adversus paganos* and Gregory's *Regula Pastoralis*:

(4) a. […] ascade hie for hwy hie nolden geþencan ealle þa brocu & þa geswinc þe he for hira willan, & eac for hiera niedþearfe fela wintra dreogende wæs, unarimedlice oft. (Or 5 4.118.24)
[he asked them why they would not consider all the afflictions and toil which he had endured at their desire and also for their needs over many years, in countless expeditions]
consulibus P. Scipionem Africanum pridie pro contione de periculo salutis suae contestatum, quod sibi pro patria laboranti ab improbis et ingratis denuntiari cognouisset (5.10.9)

(4) b. ðæt bið eac swiðe hefig broc ðæm lareowe ðæt he scyle on gemænre lare, ðær ðær he eall folc ætsomne lærð, ða lare findan ðe hi ealle behofigen. (CP 61.455.3)
[It is also a very severe labour for the teacher to have to find in general instruction when he teaches to all the people together the instruction they all require]
et grauis quidem praedicatori labor est, et in communis praedicationis uoce (3.37.3.)

[4] Cf. for instance *Ne discesseris a me, quoniam tribulatio proxima est / Ne gewit* þa *fram me; forþam me synt earfoðu swyðe neh* (Ps. Surt. 21, 9).

2.1. *The fate of the OE terminology in Middle English*

The OE terminology to express the idea of 'hard work, labour' continued in ME inasmuch as the majority of the OE terms had an early ME correspondence, with the only exception of *broc* and *earfoþe*, which had no continuation after the OE period, at least in this semantic field: ME *brok* indicated 'disease, infirmity, and an open sore or a swelling, an inflammation' (cf. *MED*, s.v.), whereas ME *arveð* 'difficult' was used as an adjective or adverb (cf. *MED*, s.v.). In reality, almost none of the OE words were really productive after the thirteenth century, at least as synonyms of hard work and labour. *I-swinch* and *iswink* (OE *geswinc*) in all its semantic nuances last occurred in the first half of the thirteenth century and exclusively in religious texts such as the *Lambeth Homilies*, the *Poema Morale*, *Vices and Virtues* and some homilies in ms. Cotton Vespasian D.14. Even shorter was the life of *i-win* (OE *ge-winn*), which is last attested in the Bodleian Homilies (Bodl. 343) and in Layamon's *Brut* l. 6201 – *Nulle we nauere þider faren.* / *to þolien þat sw[i]nc & þat iwin* [we wanted no longer to go there to experience hard work and toil]. ME *swat*/*swot* (OE *swat*) and *swink* survive longer, but mainly in binomials, in particular in the fixed formula *swink and swot* (ex. 5), whereas the form s*wench* was very rare, except in collocation with *hands* (ex. 6), and did not survive beyond the fifteenth century. Likewise, *sweng*/*swing* denoting a kind of labour or toil occurs very sporadically in ME, exclusively in religious and moral texts, and in any case disappears completely in Late Middle English (henceforth LME).

(5) With swynke and with swot [vr. swoet] and swetynge face By-tulye and by-trauaile treuly oure lyf-lode […]. (c1400(?a1387) PPl.C (Hnt HM 137) 9.241)[5]
[With swink and sweat and sweating face, by toil and by travail truly our living […]]

(6) To ȝiue hom to libbe by bi suench of hor honed (c1325(c1300) Glo. Chron.A (Clg A.11) 962)
[to give them to live by themselves with the work of their hand];

One may therefore justifiably conclude that of the lexical terms in OE expressing the notion of hard work, effort, toil and exertion none sur-

[5] For all examples drawn from ME, unless otherwise indicated, texts are cited from and according to the norms of *MED*.

vived, if not in formulas. They either did not make the transition at all or became obsolete and fell into disuse by the end of Middle English period.

3. *French modes to express hard work*

The reasons why the OE nouns expressing 'hard work' disappeared have never been investigated, but certainly the arrival of Romance borrowings (*travail*, *labour*, *toil*, *effort*, *turmoil*, *moil*, *fatigue*, etc.) must have played a significant role. Actually, it seems that French words gradually replaced the OE words: for instance, both *labour* and *travail* replace *swink* in the binomials with *sweat* (ex. 7a and 7b):

(7) a. Þe felde is a place of trauaile and of swoote [L sudoris] . (a1398) *Trev.Barth.(Add 27944)170a/a)
[The field is a place of hard work and sweat]

(7) b. Adam and Eue schulden gete hor mete wyth labour and swot.8(a1500 (?a1390) Mirk Fest.(GoughETop 4) 66/30)
[Adam and Eve should get their food with hard work and sweat]

This observation is further confirmed by an analysis of their respective frequencies. As shown in Figure 1, the decline of OE words is parallel to the rise of Romance words. In particular, only from the fourteenth century did the wave of Romance loans alter the general picture, becoming more frequent than OE words to such an extent that in the sixteenth century they replaced them almost completely[6].

[6] The figures are based on an analysis of the data available through English-Corpora. Org, the Helsinki Corpus of English Texts, and The Middle English Grammar Corpus for the period ranging from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century.

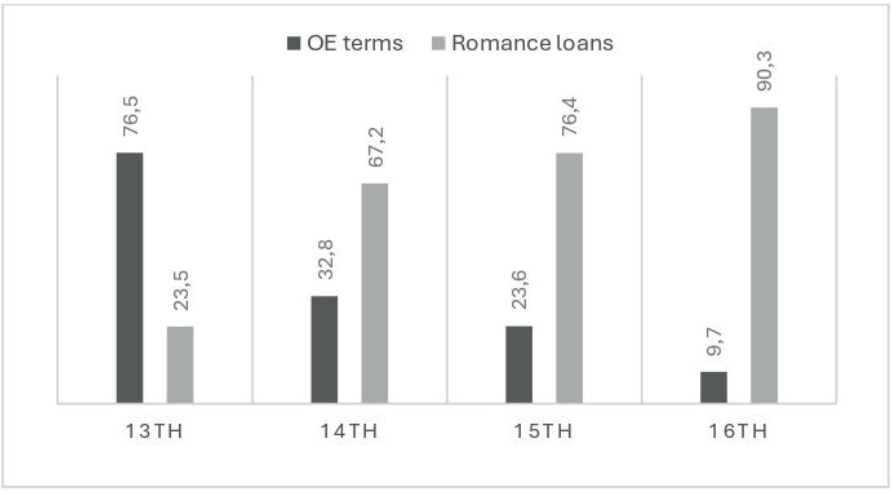


Fig. 1: Decline of OE words and contemporary increase of Romance words in the semantic field of 'hard work'.

The path was opened by *travail*, whose spelling closely resembled the Old French (henceforth OF) *travaille*, followed by *labour* and *toil*, whereas *effort* (1490), *turmoil* (1526), *moil* (1529)[7], and *fatigue* (1669) entered the vocabulary at the end of the ME period. Before Chaucer, *travail* was almost exclusively restricted to religious texts, such as sermons – its first attestation (ex. 8) is in a Kentish sermon (1275) –, hagiographies and translations, in particular by Wycliffe and Trevisa.

(8) Clepe þo werkmen and yeld hem here trauail. (c1275 *Kentish Serm.* (LdMisc 471), 220)
[Call the workmen and give them their work]

From the fourteenth century onwards, another spelling (i.e. *travel*) made its way into the language, once again firstly in religious texts and translations. However, the different spellings only began to be associated to different meanings (labour vs. travel) at a very late stage, that is, in the nineteenth century. Before that, both forms were used and associated indifferently with either meaning, especially in ME, where *travail*/*travel* still expressed manual work – e.g. *þe trauell of my hondeȝ* [the work of my hands] (a1382 *Bible (Wycliffite, E.V.)* (Bodl. 959) (1959) Gen. xxxi.

[7] This is the only lexeme that entered first as a verb and later as a noun. Interestingly, it is also the only one whose first attestation is in scientific texts, i.e. the Middle English translation of Guy de Chauliac's *Grande Chirurgie*.

42), *ȝoure trauel schal be wastid in veyn* [your efforts should be wasted in vain] (a1382 *Bible (Wycliffite, E.V.)* (Bodl. 959) (1959) Lev. xxvi. 20).

Just a little bit later, at the beginning of the fourteenth century, *labour* made its first appearance, denoting an instance of physical or mental exertion in the same text-type as *travail*, or to be more precise, in the *Life and Martyrdom of Thomas Becket* (ex. 9 a.). By the end of the century, *labour* started to denote an instance of physical or mental exertion to express '(hard) work, physical toil' (9 b. and 9 d.) as well as '(physical) suffering and the result of such work'. Its semantic extension apparently took place initially in formal texts related to religious or moral issues (cf. ex. 9 a.-c.) as well as translations from OF and Latin (cf. ex. 9 b. and 9 d.); afterwards its use became established in literary texts, and it is found in Chaucer, Gower[8] and others. The examples (9 b.) and (9 d.) are particularly significant, because they provide further evidence that, in the early fifteenth century, *labour* was considered to be semantically equivalent to *travail*[9].

(9) a. The reve amorwe that hem scholde: to herĕ labour lede, Nuste he tho he mistĕ hem: what him was to rede (c1300 *Life & Martyrdom Thomas Becket* (Harl. 2277) (1845) l. 49)[10]
[The reeve next morning that should lead them to their labour, he did not know, though he missed them, what was ready for him]

(9) b. The labour [a1425 MS. L. V. trauel] of foolys shal tormenten hem that kunnen not in to the cite gon. (a1382 *WBible*(1) (Dc 369(1) Eccl.10.15)
[The toil of fools wearies them; they do not know the way to town.]

(9) c. Strengþe stont vs in no stide, But longyng and beoing in laboure. (c1390 *In a Pistel* (Vrn)91)
[Strength will stay us in no stead, For all our longing and our labour]

(9) d. Abstening fro.longnez of stricture of þe girdil & fro multitude of rydyng & labour [*Ch.(2): trauaile; L labore] of þe backe (?a1425 *Chauliac(1) (NY 12)148a/a.)

[8] In Gower's *Confessio Amantis* it also meant 'tillage', e.g. *With mannes labour (i.* l. 3252).

[9] Interestingly, their combination with *toil* in binomials were the context where *toil* acquired the meaning of 'intense labour' and 'hard exertion', e.g. *Toylouse, full of toyle and labour* (1530 J. Palsgrave *Lesclarcissement* 327/2).

[10] Quoted from *OED*, s.v. *labour*.

[abstaining from diurnity of tightness of the girdle and from multitude of riding and physical exertion of the back]

This semantic field continued to enrich itself seamlessly with new Romance loans and native coinages. Indeed, early Modern English was one of the most productive periods for the development of the English lexicon.

3.1. Labouren *and* travailen*: not only 'to work hard'*

The same loans are attested also as predicates. The predicate *travailen* in the sense of 'exerting oneself and labouring' was first recorded in the same text as the noun *travail* (Huber, 2021), namely the Kentish sermon quoted in ex. 8 – e.g. *Þos laste on ure habbeþ i travailed* (*c*1275 *Kentish Serm.* (LdMisc 471), 220) [These last ones have worked one hour] – and is also often attested in translations from OF texts. At the same time as, and in analogy with Anglo-Norman *travailler*, *travailen*[11] began to be used also instead of OE motion verbs such as *wenden* (ex. 10 a.). Unexpectedly, the noun *travail*/*travel* acquired the meaning of 'journey' much later (ex. 10 b.), contravening what is generally assumed, namely that loans first enter as nouns and then, but not always, as predicates (Durkin, 2014).

(10) a. : Ȝwy ne bi-holde ȝe þe heiȝe temple..Of sonne and Mone and steorrene al-so, fram þe este to þe weste Þat trauaillieth [Hrl: Wendeþ] and neuere werie ne beoth ne neuere ne habbeth reste? (c1300 SLeg.Kath.(LdMisc 108)24)
[The high temple of sun and moon and also stars, that travels from the east to the west and never is weary and never has rest.]

(10) b. Þou art welcon [read: welcom], wyȝe, to my place, & þou hatȝ tymed þi trauayl as truee mon schulde. (c1400(?c1390) Gawain (Nero A.10) 2241)
[You are welcome, certainly, to my place, and you have timed your travel as a true knight should.]

The earliest occurrences of *labouren* date from 1385, or several decades after the first attestation of *labour*, and they denote physical

[11] The PDE spelling, i.e. *travelen*, first occurs in the fifteenth century and becomes frequent in the course of the sixteenth century, while the semantic specialization of the different forms at the predicate level is simultaneous to the differentiation at the nominal level.

work. The first quotation, taken from Chaucer, shows a verbal binomial where the predicate *labouren* is in coordination with *swinken*, a form of OE derivation, and its complement of manner *with hands* (ex. 11 a.). From the concrete sense it developed more abstract meanings (ex. 11 b.), and in combination with direction adverbs and prepositions it could express difficult and laborious movement (ex. 11 c.).

(11) a. What sholde he studie […] Or swynken with his handes and laboure [vr. labore]? (c1387-95 Chaucer CT.Prol.(Manly-Rickert) A.186)
[What should he study […] Or work with his hands and labour]

(11) b. He wolle begynne a newe feyned suite ayen, so supposyng to laboure the seid suppliants insenytly [read infenytly] by untrue suites. (1437 RParl.4.510a)
[He would begin a newly created (law)suit again, supposing thus to infinitely vex the above-said suppliants by means of untrue (law)suites.]

(11) c. Owr Lord sent leeuyn, thundyr, & reyne ny al þe tyme þat þei durst not labowryn owtward. (c1438 MKempe B (Add 61823) ii. 234)
[Our Lord sent lighting, thunder and rain neigh all the time so that they durst not go [work] outdoor]

In other words, *labouren* behaved as a synonym of *travailen* in its full semantic spectrum. This curious development raises the question of whether it can be argued that these Romance loans entered into some competition with each other, thus helping to shape the semantic field of 'hard work' and promoting the entry of *travel* into the field of 'journey'.

4. *Some figures on the occurrences of* labour/travail *and* labouren/travailen

Looking at their occurrences, one cannot help but notice that in the course of the ME period the two nouns (*labour* and *travel*) and the predicates (*labouren* and *travailen*) were used less and less interchangeably as gradually each became associated specifically with one of the two meanings. At the nominal level, *labour* and *travail* (in both spellings) showed a consistently divergent development: while *labour* steadily increased in association with the concept of 'physical and mental exertion, or hard

work', *travail* decreased to such an extent that in the sixteenth century *labour* overtook *travail.* The development becomes clearer if one looks at the seventeenth century. On the other hand, the noun *labour* never served as a valid alternative to *travail*, meaning 'journey'.

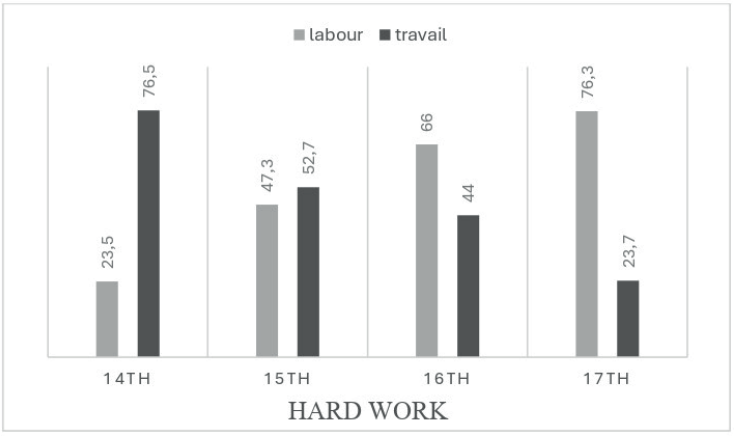


Fig. 2: Frequencies of *labour* and *travail* expressing 'hard work'.

At the predicate level (Fig. 3 and Fig. 4), *labouren* could occasionally denote a laborious journey or movement, though this usage was consistently less common than *travailen*. Notably, *labouren* came to express movement only at a later stage of its linguistic development and remained marginal in this context. Conversely, in the realm of physical exertion and hard work, *labouren* quickly supplanted *travailen*.

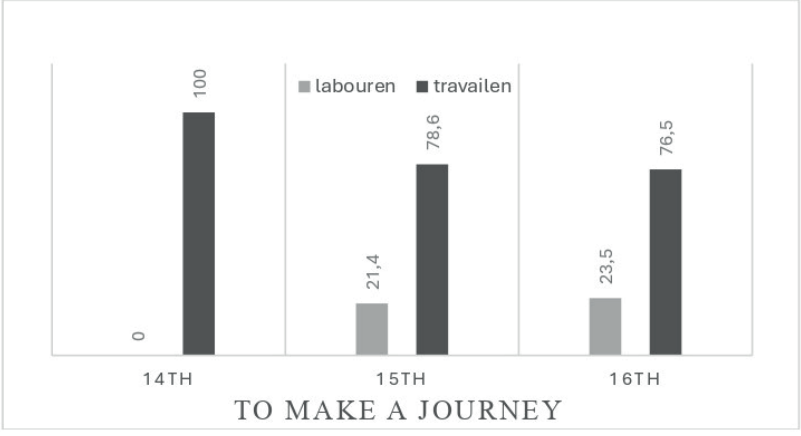


Fig. 3: Frequencies of *labouren* and *travailen* expressing 'to move or travel with effort'.

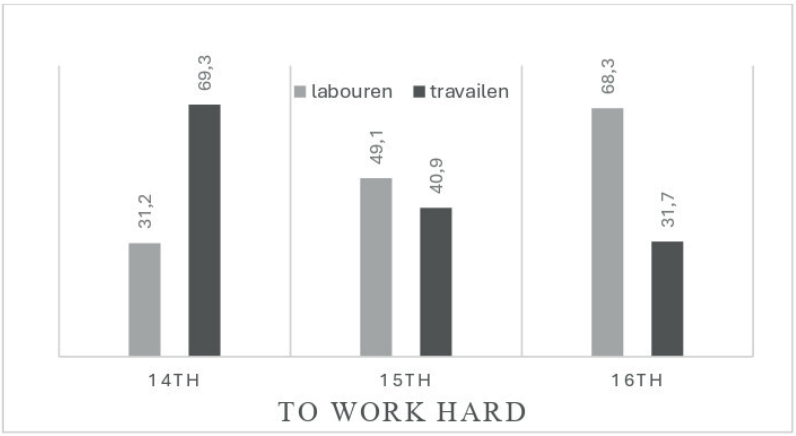
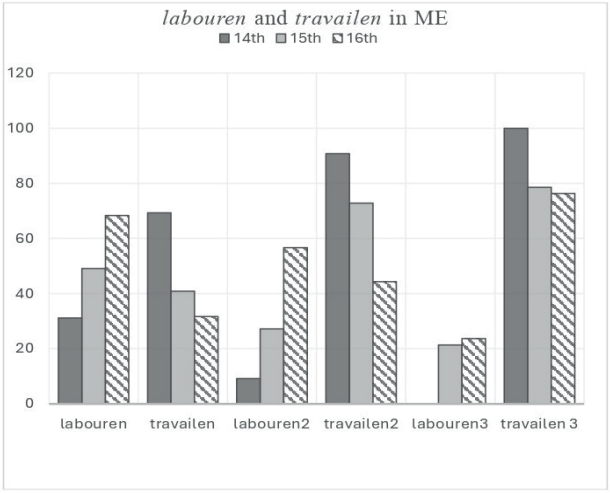


Fig. 4: Frequencies of *labouren* and *travailen* expressing 'to work hard'.

If the frequency of *labouren* and *travailen* in their two main meanings is compared, their semantic specialization stands out even more clearly. In Figures 5a and 5b, the labels *labouren* and *travailen* indicate the act of hard work or physical (and mental) exertion, *labouren3* and *travailen3* the action of movement, and finally *labouren2* and *travailen2* 'suffering' as well as 'vexing', a meaning that has not been taken into consideration so far, but that helps to understand the general development. The two figures show the same numbers organized differently: Figure 5a shows the development of the same lexeme according to century; in Figure 5b the data are organised according to the lexeme, thus showing the relative frequency of each form in each century.



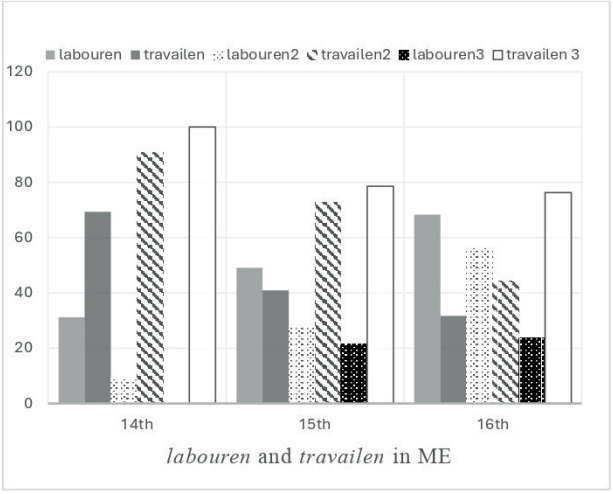


Fig. 5a-b: Frequencies of *labouren* and *travailen* in the three meanings: 'to work hard' (*labouren*/*travailen*), 'to suffer or to vex' (*labouren2*/*travailen2*), 'to move with effort/to travel (*labouren3*/*travailen3*).

Labouren entered the English vocabulary strongly linked to the semantic sphere of physical exertion and work, and for the most part continued to express this notion, even reinforcing it (Fig. 5a). *Travailen* behaved as a general form to convey different nuances and effects of taking pains in doing something. Accordingly, it expressed 'suffer' and its causative 'vex', to then include 'to work hard, to exert oneself', as the fatigue connected with physical, hard work was perceived as sufferance, as well as 'to move with effort and difficulty'[12]. These three main meanings of *travailen* are all well documented in its earliest attestations in the thirteenth century and continued almost unvaried during the fourteenth century, when the new loan *labour* and its verbal form *labouren* entered the language as one of those «[w]ords that could show input from either French or Latin or both» (Durkin, 2014: 246). Although the OF *labour* was also strictly connected with the idea of sufferance, as confirmed by its semantic development in French[13], the

[12] It should be noted incidentally that OF *travail* is traced back to a reconstructed Latin form *TRIPALIĀRE 'torture', derived from *tripālium* 'torture instrument made up of three poles', which is attested as *trepālium* in the acts of the Council of Auxerre held in the second half of the 6th century AD.

[13] «[T]rouble, effort, affliction, misfortune (first half of the 12th cent. in Anglo-Norman), hard work (1155), burden, task (c1170 or earlier in Anglo-Norman), suffering

Lat. *lăbor* ‘toil, work’ and *laborāre* ‘toil, work’ referred to tiring work, which was primarily that of the fields, and was likely to be related to the verb *lābi* ‘to fall, slip’ in the sense of ‘effort that makes the legs bend’ (Nocentini, 2010: s.v. *lavoro*). After the fifteenth century, *travail* steadily occurred more and more frequently to express movement.

While on the one hand at the nominal level the two loans maintained their competence in different spheres, in a sort of hypernym-hyponym relationship, where *travail* emphasised the idea of sufferance, on the other hand at the predicate level they entered in competition in those contexts expressing tiring work either with emphasis on the tiring effect or on the work done. Given the strong link of *labouren* with the area of physical exertion and work, it reinforced its domain in this area at the expense of *travailen*, which specialized into a verb of motion[14]. Only at a later stage, once *travailen* as a verb of movement had been established, did the noun *travail/travel* ‘travel’ appear, with its two alternative spellings, as a formation derived from the predicate.

5. *Conclusions*

Since their earliest appearance, the loans *labour* and *travail* and their respective verb forms had been used to express ‘hard work’ and ‘physical effort’, that is, concepts not necessarily associated with their prevalent uses in French and Latin. Looking at the text types where they occur (cf. Fig. 6), one observes first of all that these loans did not belong to an informal or common register, as they are attested significantly in ‘translations’ (including only those texts which are direct translations), ‘religious texts’ (including those texts whose content is religious, but which are not direct translations) and ‘chronicles’. In particular, *labour* and *labouren* are frequent in ‘religious texts’, which often have Latin models or are at any rate influenced by the Latin language, whereas *travail* and *travailen*

(c1270 or earlier in Anglo-Norman), outcome, product, or result of work (1283), fatigue (c1349), difficulty (c1370)» (*OED*, s.v. *labour* | *labor* (n.), Etymology).

[14] Dekeyser (1995: 132) explained the metonymical development of *travailen*/*travailler* to a motion verb ‘travel’ with the «natural association between ‘journey’ and the ‘toiling’ that goes with it». According to Huber (2021) it is a result of a special (intransitive) motion-construction, typical of ME and PDE, with verbs that denote the ‘means’ of motion, in this case ‘struggling, making effort or suffering’: «a non-motion verb denoting ‘exertion, toiling’ acquires a motion meaning through repeated use in the intransitive motion construction».

do not seem to be linked to any special text-type, but show a slight preference for 'chronicles', that is, texts which were often influenced by French originals. It is remarkable that in 'translations' *labour*/*labouren* predominated while in 'others' *travail*/*travailen* prevailed.

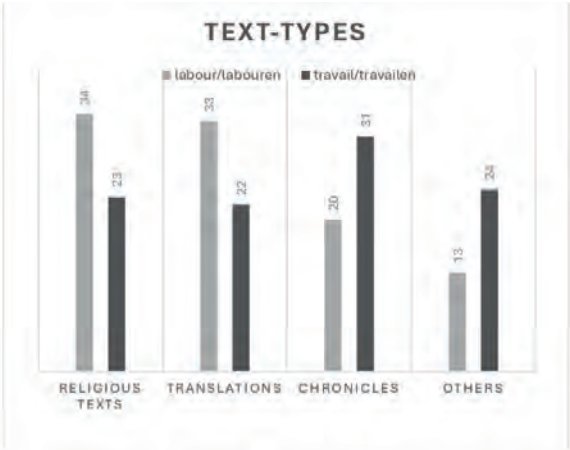


Fig. 6: Distribution of *labour*/*labouren* and *travail*/*travailen* in the sense of 'hard work' according to text typology.

One could suppose that *labour*/*labouren* entered ME in connection with Lat. *labor* and in contexts where this meaning was more appropriate. As a consequence, the previous loan *travail*/*travailen* was used more often in those contexts and constructions in which the meaning of 'physical effort, hard work' was not the main one, thus moving towards a specialization and a semantic reinterpretation: the first step involved the predicates whose uses overlapped, and, once *travailen* acquired, as its main meaning, that of 'travelling', at the nominal level the two meanings became formally distinguished into *travel* and *travail*, which expressed a special kind of sufferance and hard work.

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