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Dare and the 'degrammaticalization' debate – reappraising the evidence

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Earlier English

- Old English: c. 700–1100
- Middle English: c. 1100–1500
- Modern English
  - Early: c. 1500–1750
  - Late: c. 1750–present

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Dare in Present-Day English

- Morphology: variation
  - 3SG *dare*/*dares*
- Choice of infinitive: variation
  - *dare (to) do sth.*
- Argument structure: both secondary and transitive uses
  - *dare (to) do sth.*
  - But also: *dare sb. (to do sth.)*
- *Do*-support: variation
  - *don't dare*/*daren't*

Dare in Present-Day English

- so this means you daren't give him anything now (1993, S_meeting)
- the draftsman did not dare to risk such Kafkaesque accuracy (1990, W_ac_polit_law_edu)
- she moved over to the wall, where a sofa seemed to dare her to sit on it (1993, W_fict_prose)

BYU-BNC (Davies 2004–)

Dare in Present-Day English

- "marginal modal" (Quirk et al. 1985: 138)
- "marginal auxiliary" (Biber et al. 1999: 484)
- "blurring" of auxiliary/verb distinction (Huddleston & Pullum 2002: 109f)
- "modal and full verb constructions" (Warner 1993: 42)

Dare in Old English*

- Morphology: no variation, always irregular
  - 3SG *dear* (and PRET *dorste*)
- Choice of infinitive: no variation, *to*-infinitive not used
  - *Ne dear ic faran* 'I daren't go'
- Argument structure: only secondary uses
  - No **Ic dear þe* attested
- Semantically "bleached" in some cases?

***) c. 700–1100 AD**

Dare in Old English

Moyses	*hydde*	*hys*	*nebb;*	*he*	*ne*	*dorste*	*beseon*
Moses	hid.3SG	his	face	he	not	dared.3SG	look.INF

ongean	*God*
against	God

‘Moses hid his face; he didn’t dare to look at God’

DOE Corpus: Exod, 3.6

From more to less grammatical?

YES

- Beths (1999: 1105): “the existence of the main verb *dare* in ModE is the evidence that grammaticalization may also have the opposite effect [i.e. move from functional to lexical, SG]”
- Schlüter (2010: 321): “auxiliary verb forms have progressively been losing ground to full verb forms”
- Los (2015: 112): “the new lexical *dare* that develops in Middle English”

NO

- Krug (2000: 243f): move from one auxiliary subtype to another
- Traugott (2001): main verb and auxiliary forms have always co-existed

This paper

1. The development of regular morphology
2. “Bleached” semantics in Old English?
3. The development of transitive *dare*
4. Future work

1. THE DEVELOPMENT OF REGULAR MORPHOLOGY

Preterite-present → weak verb

	Old English	Early Modern English	Present-Day English
3SG PRES	***dear***	***dare*** / ***dareth***	***dare*** / ***dares***
3SG PAST	***dorste***	***durst*** / ***dared***	***dared***

~~**"auxiliary" → "full verb"**~~

irregular → regular

History of preterite-presents

PDE	**OE**	**PGmc**
can	*cann* ‘can, know’	**kann*
may	*mæg* ‘can, avail’	**mag*
must	*mot*	**mōt*
shall	*sceal* ‘must, owe’	**skal*
will	(*wile*)	(**wilī*)
ought	*ah* ‘own’	**aih*
(*dare*)	*dearr*	**dars*
	þearf ‘need’	**þarf*
	deah ‘avail’	**daug*
	ann ‘grant’	**ann*
	wat ‘know’	**wait*
	ge-man ‘remember’	**(ga)-man*
	ge-neah ‘suffice’	**(ga)-nah*
		**lais* ‘know’
		**ōg* ‘fear’

< **PIE** stative?

Randall & Jones (2015)

Summary: regularization

- Preterite-present morphology not distinctive of auxiliaries in Old English
- Weak forms *dares/dared* are more regular or morphologically transparent, but hardly more lexical

2. “BLEACHED” SEMANTICS IN OLD ENGLISH?

Dare + "courage" verb

Hwa	*dear*	*nu*	*gedyrstlæcan*	*þæt*	*he*	*derige*
who	dares	now	dare.INF	that	he	harm.SBJV

þam	*folce*
that.DAT	people.DAT

'Who would now dare to harm these people' (Beths 1999)

DOE Corpus: ÆHomM 14, 306

Usually interpreted as “bleached”

- Beths (1999: 1081)
- Tomaszewska (2014: 70)
- Los (2015: 112)
- Loureiro-Porto (2009: 69): “totally bleached [...] it is clearly redundant to say *who dares to dare?*”
- Explicitly characterized as highly grammaticalized by Beths and Tomaszewska

However ...

- *Dare* and other “courage” verbs not synonymous
- Combination semantically motivated, not redundant
- Corpus investigation:
  - DOE Corpus (~ 2.3m words)
  - 10 attestations: *dare* + *gedyrstlæcan*, *geþristlæcan*, *geneðan*

“Courage” verbs in Old English

dare

(ge)dyrstlæcan

(ge)þristlæcan

(ge)neðan

geþristian/aþristian

gedyrstigan

“Courage” verbs in Old English

dare

+ *gedyrstlæcan* (3 att.)
+ *geþristlæcan* (4 att.)
+ *geneðan* (3 att.)

Dare + "courage" verb

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'Who would now dare to harm these people' (Beths 1999)

DOE Corpus: ÆHomM 14, 306

Execution of Haman (Esther 7-8)

Source: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, MS 78 D 38 II, f. 15v (c. 1430)

Execution of Haman

Se cyning þa andwyrde þære cwene þus and eac Mardocheo swiðe mildelice: Aman ic aheng and his æhta þe betæhte.

Hwa dear nu gedyrstlæcan, þæt he derige þam folce?

Awritað nu gewritu, beþam þe ge willaþ, þæt eall beo aidlod Amanes sirwung ongean þam ludeiscum and him ne derige nan man.

'The king then answered the queen and Mordecai very gracefully: "I've executed Haman and given you his possessions. Who now dares to be so bold that he is going to harm that people? Now write a decree, such as you see fit, so that all of Haman's plotting against the Jews is made useless and no one will harm them."'

DOE Corpus: ÆHomM 14, 306

Dare + "courage" verb 2.0

Hwa	*dear*	*nu*	*gedyrstlæcan*	*þæt*	*he*	*derige*
who	dares	now	**be.so.bold.INF**	that	he	harm.SBJV

þam	*folce*
that.DAT	people.DAT

'Who now dares to be so bold that he is going to harm that people'

DOE Corpus: ÆHomM 14, 306

Other example

Forðam	*ic*	*ne*	*dorste*	*geðristlæcan*	*þara*	*minra*
therefore	I	not	dared	**presume.INF**	the.GEN.PL	mine.GEN.PL

awuht	*fela*	*on*	*gewrit*	*settan,*	*forðam*	*me*	*wæs*	*uncuð,*
at.all	many	in	writing	put	because	me.DAT	was	unknown

hwæt	*þæs*	*ðam*	*lician*	*wolde*	*þe*	*æfter*	*us*	*wæren*
what	it.GEN	those.DAT	please	would	who	after	us	were.SBJV

'I did not dare to take the liberty to write down many of my own [laws], since it was unknown to me what of it would please those that may come after us'

DOE Corpus: LawAfEl, 49.9

Summary: no redundancy

gedyrstlæcan/geþristlæcan

≈ ‘be so bold, presume, take the liberty’

geneðan

≈ ‘risk, venture, put at stake’

dare + INF

≈ ‘have enough courage to realize the state-of-affairs expressed by INF’

3. TRANSITIVE *DARE*

Early ModE example

- These [creatures] ride in triumph, as hauing conquered the wits of Man; and still they dare them to come out of their dens of instincts, intelligences, and hidden qualities

(1619, Rous, *The arte of happines)*

19th-century example

dare (dæə). Children in quarrelling say, "I dare you," "I dog dare you," "I black dog dare you," "I double dog dare you," "I double black dog dare you." [In Michigan *dare* and *double dare*.]

"Kentucky Words", *Dialect Notes* I, p. 229 [1896]

Transitive *dare*

- Not attested in Old or Middle English
- Appears in Early Modern English
  - First attestation in *OED* dated 1580
- No similar development in *can*, *must* etc.

But *dare* was not alone ...

1. dare, *v.*[1] View full entry — c1000

...To have boldness or courage (*to do* something); to be so bold as....

2. dare, *v.*[2] View full entry — c1220

...To gaze fixedly or stupidly; to stare as one terrified, amazed, or fascinated. *Obs*....

OED

dare v.[2]

- Etymology: < OE **darian*?
- Weak morphology (*dare*, *dares*, *dared*)
- Ambitransitive:
  - Intransitive ‘stare, tremble, be dumbfounded’
  - Transitive ‘daunt, frighten, dumbfound’

dare v.[2], intransitive

- *My flesshe dyderis and daris for doute of my dede*

  'My flesh quivers and trembles because of anxiety about my deed'

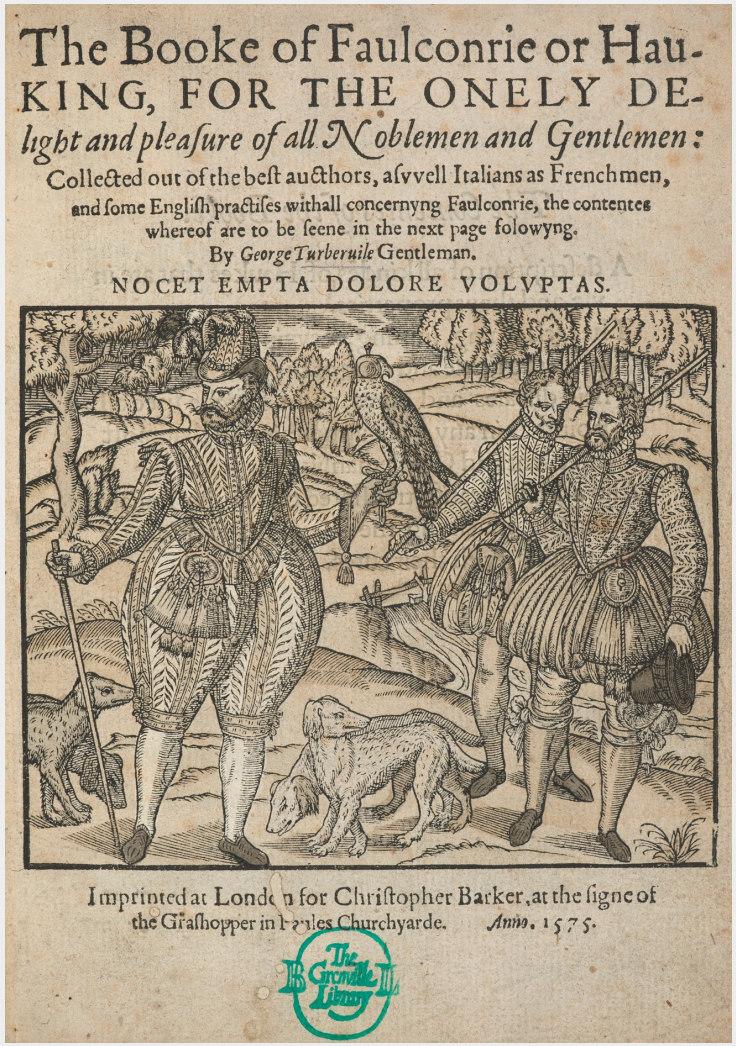
  c1440 *York Myst.* xxviii. 2

dare v.[2], transitive

- Like vnto men that dare larkes, which holde vp an hoby [falcon], that the larkes eies beyng euer vpon the hoby, shuld not see the nette that is layd on theyr heades.

  1551 T. Cranmer *Answer S. Gardiner* 121

OED



The Booke of Faulconrie or Hau-
KING, FOR THE ONELY DE-
light and pleaſure of all Noblemen and Gentlemen:
Collected out of the beſt authors, aſvvell Italians as Frenchmen,
and ſome Engliſh practiſes withall concernyng Faulconrie, the contentes
whereof are to be ſeene in the next page folowyng.
By *George Turberuile* Gentleman.
NOCET EMPTA DOLORE VOLVPTAS.

Imprinted at Londo n for Chriſtopher Barker, at the ſigne of
the Graſhopper in P-ules Churchyarde. *Anno.* 1575.

The Grenville Library

George Turbervile, *The Booke of Faulconrie* (London, 1575)

Source: The British Library

dare v.[2]

- daring of larkes [...] a very good sporte and full of delight, to sée the fearefull nature of the silly Larke, with the great awe and subiection that the Hobbie hath her in

  Turbervile (1611 [1575]: 57)

dare v.[2]

- Quite frequent in Early Modern English
  - Occurs several times in Shakespeare
  - Included in Shakespeare glossaries from the 18th c.
    → verb must have fallen out of general use
- Formally identical with *dare* v.[1] in some forms
  - Non-finite forms: PTCP *dared*; INF *dare*?
  - 1SG PRES *dare*
- Samuels (1963): *dare* v.[2] lost to avoid confusion with *dare* v.[1]

Possible critical context

- An English man hath three qualyties, he can suffer no partner in his love, no straunger to be his equal, or to be dared by any (1580, Lyly, *Euphues and his England*)

- Hauing so godly agouernoure, and uertewes consolers, whois yeys cannot be darid with these manifest and open abhominacions (1547, Hooper, *An answer...*)

Similarity noticed in Early ModE

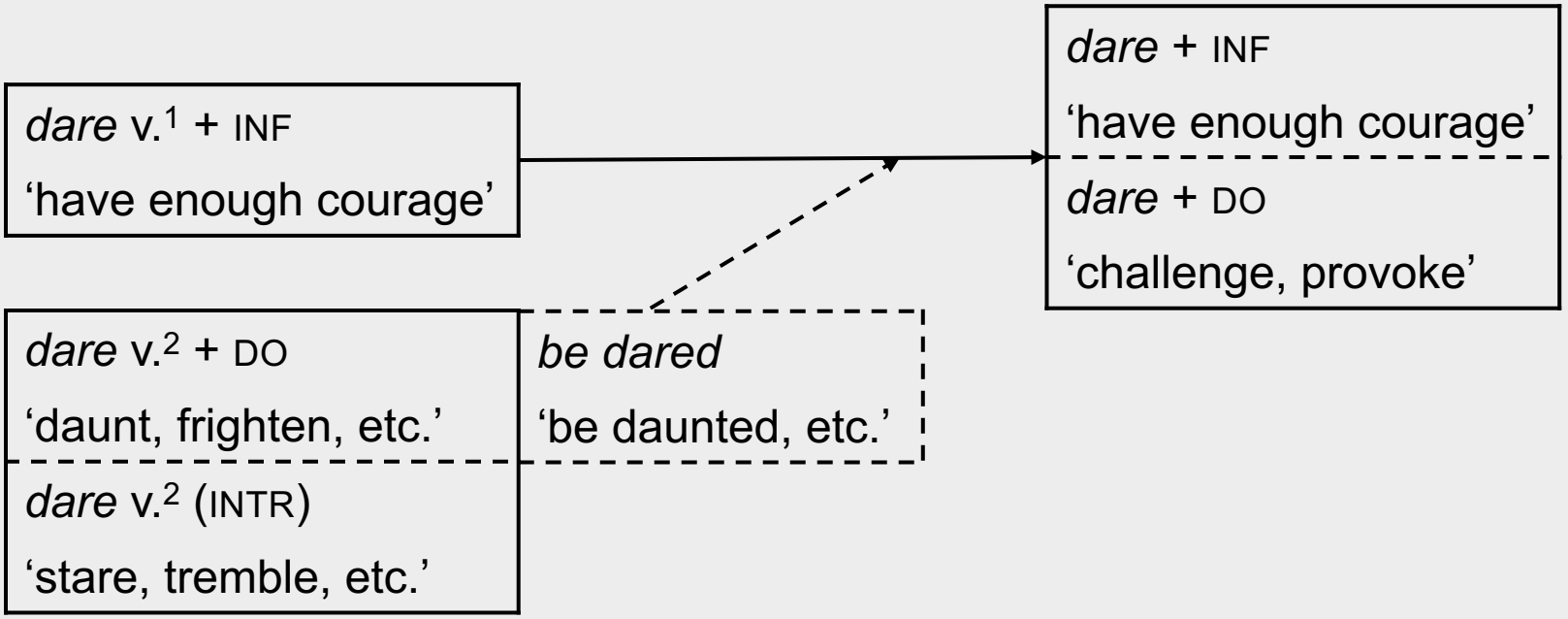
- Enclos'd the bush about, and there him tooke
  Like darred larke, not daring up to looke

  Spenser (1805 [1596]: 199-200)

- *to* Dare, *an old English word, for to* stare, *because they which behold a man stedfastly with a wide open* staring eie, *are said to bee* bold *or* daring

  Minsheu (1627: 197)

Speculation



Shameless self-promotion

Gregersen, Sune (forthcoming):

“‘To dare larks’ in Early Modern English”.

Notes and Queries 64:4

Concluding summary

- The development of weak morphology an instance of regularization, not a change in grammatical status
- Old English *dare* not redundant when occurring with other “courage” verbs
- Transitive *dare* possibly a continuation of *dare* v.[2]

→ Formal changes to *dare*, but functional stability

→ Present-Day English *dare* has multiple sources (cf. Van de Velde, De Smet & Ghesquière 2013)

4. FUTURE WORK

ModE dialects (late 19th c.)

- *dar 'em frae't* (Yorkshire)
  'frighten them from doing it'

- *her dared'n t'hain stones to the ducks* (Somerset)
  'She sternly forbad him to throw stones at the ducks'

Dare and modality

- How does the meaning ‘have enough courage’ relate to the semantic field of modality?
- Is *dare* even an auxiliary?
  - What would Boye & Harder (2012) say?
- Other pathways for verbs with the meaning ‘dare’?
  - Mainland Scandinavian: ‘dare’ → ‘might’ (epistemic)

Any input from typologists and experts of other languages is greatly appreciated :)

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OLD ENGLISH ATTESTATIONS

Geþristlæcan

- Þa sæde he him, þæt on þære ylcan nyhte, þe he se ærendraca him æfter asended wæs, se healica papa wearð þurh nihtlice gesihþe on swefne swiðe gebreged, hu he dorste geþristlæcean, þæt he hete þone Godes man swencean & him to gelangian. (GD 1 (H), 192)
- Ne sy nan sacerdhades man ne læwedes hades þe ma þe durre geþristlæcan þæt aðer oððe calic oððe disc oððe ænig þara fata þe to godcundum bigonge gehalgod bið to ænigum woruldþinge do. (ThCap 1 (Sauer), 57)
- Þa sona swa þæt ongæton ealle þa Langbearde, þe on ðam lande wæron, hi ne dorston ofer þæt geþrystlæcan, þæt hi ohte grettan þa halgan stowe rihtgeleaffullra manna. (GDPref and 3 (C), 622)

Gedyrstlæcan

- Witodlice þa lareowas þe us lar of com, hi bododan þam hæðenum and þam hetelum ehterum, and heora lif sealdon for Godes geleafan; ac we ne durran nu to þam gedyrstlæcan, þæt we Cristenum cyninge oððe Cristenum folce Godes beboda and Godes willan secgan. (ÆHom 19, 183)
- He genam þone cniht be þam loccum & eft mid færlicum ryne gecyrde. & þa sona swa he þæt land gehran, he wæs cyrrende to him sylfum & on bæc beseah. & þa forþon þe he ongæt, þæt he ne mihte ne ne dorste to þon gedyrstlæcan, þæt he swa ferde, gif he hit wiste, he wæs wundriende þa wisan & aforhtode & þa cyrde to þam fædær & gesæde þa wisan him swa gedone. (GD 2 (C), 7.115)

Geneðan

- [Unferð] ... Selfa ne dorste under yða gewin aldre geneþan, drihtscype dreogan; þær he dome forleas, <ellenmærðum> (Beo, 418)
- Nænig þæt dorste deor geneþan swæsra gesiða, nefne sinfrea, þæt hire an dæges eagum starede (Beo, 543)
- On þæm dagum wæs swa micel ege from ðæm wifmonnum, þætte Europe ne Asiam ne ealle þa neahþeoda ne mehton aþencean ne acræftan hu hi him wiðstondan mehten, ær þon hie gecuron Ercol þone ent þæt he hie sceolde mid eallum Creca cræftum beswican. & þeah ne dorste he geneðan þæt he hie mid firde gefore, ær he ongan mid Creca scipun þe mon dulmunus hætt, þe mon sægð þæt on an scip mæge an þusend manna (Or 1, 10.30)