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THE STATUS OF OLD ENGLISH *DARE* REVISITED

SUNE GREGERSEN*

University of Amsterdam

ABSTRACT

The development of *dare* in the history of English has played an important role in the literature on grammatical change and (de)grammaticalization. This paper aims to clarify two issues regarding the syntax and semantics of *dare* in earlier English: when it is first attested with *to*-infinitives, and to what extent it can be said to have been semantically 'bleached' in a number of Old English attestations. The conclusions are, firstly, that *dare* is not attested with *to*-infinitives in Old English (*pace* Tomaszewska 2014), and that a number of Middle English attestations that have been suggested in the literature are not convincing (*pace* Visser 1963–73; Beths 1999; Molencki 2005). Secondly, it is argued that the co-occurrence of *dare* and verbs like *gedyrstlæcan* 'venture, be bold, presume' in Old English is not an indication of semantic 'bleaching' of *dare*, and that the verb was not more 'auxiliarized' in Old English than it is today.

Keywords: Old English; Middle English; semantics; grammaticalization; auxiliaries; *dare*.

1. Introduction[1]

The history of *dare* has been a much-discussed topic in English historical linguistics. During the course of history, *dare* seems to have developed a number of features which are more typically associated with lexical verbs than with auxiliaries in English, such as the weak past tense form *dared* (instead of the original 'preterite-present' *durst*) and complementation with the *to*-infinitive rather than the bare infinitive (cf. Visser 1963–73: §1355). This has

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been interpreted in various ways. Warner (1993: 202f) speaks of a 'split' development into a modal and a non-modal form in Early Modern English. Beths (1999) and Schlüter (2010) describe the development of *dare* as a case of degrammaticalization, a move from a more to a less grammatical status (i.e., from auxiliary to lexical verb; cf. also Molencki 2005: 151). On the other hand, Krug (2000: 243f) interprets it as having moved from one auxiliary subtype to another; and Norde (2009: 121f), based on an unpublished paper by Traugott (2001), denies that the development of *dare* counts as an instance of degrammaticalization.

However, before a satisfactory interpretation of the available data can be reached, it is crucial that linguists agree on what is actually in the data, and how to read the relevant attestations from earlier stages of the language. This paper aims to clarify two issues about the history of *dare*. In section 2, it will be argued that a number of attestations of *dare* plus the *to*-infinitive that have been suggested for Old English (Tomaszewska 2014) and Middle English (Visser 1963–73; Beths 1999; Molencki 2005) are unconvincing and rest on misinterpretations of the texts. Section 3 takes up the question of semantic 'bleaching' of *dare* in Old English. In a number of attestations *dare* co-occurs with other 'courage' verbs, such as *gedyrstlæcan* 'venture, be bold, presume'. This has been interpreted as evidence that *dare* had 'bleached' semantics and had a highly 'auxiliarized' status in Old English. By comparing this Old English pattern to a similar one in another Germanic language, Present-Day Danish, it can be argued that *dare* in such contexts had its usual meaning and was not 'bleached' compared to when it occurred with other verbs. In section 4, I briefly consider the significance of these findings and suggest that while *dare* can be classified as a 'secondary' verb (Dixon 2005), there is little evidence that it was more auxiliarized in Old English than it is today.

2. The *to*-infinitive after *dare*

In Present-Day English, *dare* can occur with infinitives both with and without *to*, depending on regional variety and linguistic context (cf. Quirk et al. 1985: §3.42; Taeymans 2004). A central question in the history of *dare* is when the use with the *to*-infinitive developed. Mitchell (1985: §996) includes *dare* among the verbs that only takes infinitives without *to* in Old English (OE), and Mustanoja (1960: 530) reports no *to*-infinitives in Middle English (ME). However, a number of OE and ME examples of *to*-infinitives have since been suggested in the literature; but as this section will show, many of these examples are based on unfortunate interpretations of the data.

In a study on *dare* in OE, Tomaszewska (2014: 68f) writes that while the verb usually took the infinitive without *to*, *to*-infinitives are occasionally found.[2] The author claims to have found four examples in the corpus of the *Dictionary of Old English*, all of them with *to* but without the usual inflectional ending; e.g., *to genealæcean* instead of the expected *to genealæceanne* 'to approach, to come closer'. While such 'uninflected' *to*-infinitives are certainly attested in OE (though more frequently in poetry than prose, cf. Hogg & Fulk 2011: 224), I believe alternative interpretations are preferable for all of Tomaszewska's four examples.

In two of the examples, given here in (1) and (2), *to* is a postposition following a pronoun. The verb *genealæcan*, as in (1), can occur with either an object or an adpositional phrase with *to*, and the supplement to the *Anglo-Saxon Dictionary* explicitly mentions that *to* can occur postpositionally (e.g., *He hym to genealæhte*, cf. Toller 1921: s.v. *ge-nēalǣcan*).

(1)   *þa   ne   dorste   he   him   to   genealæcean*
       then   not   dared.3SG he   him.DAT   to   come.closer.INF
       'then he didn't dare come closer to him' (GD 2 (H), 14.132.9)[3]

On the example in (2), Tomaszewska (2014: 69) writes that *geteon* means 'to appropriate' and occurs after the infinitive particle *to*. But again, *to* is a postposition following the pronoun *him*, cf. also Toller (1921: s.v. *ge-tēon*, 4).

(2)   *Hu   mæg   oððe   hu   dear   ænig   læwede   man*
       how   can.3SG   or   how   dare.3SG any   lay.M.NOM   man

       him   to   geteon   þurh   riccetere   cristes   wican?
       him.DAT   to   draw.INF by   force.DAT   Christ.GEN   duties.ACC
       'How can or dare any layman seize [lit. 'draw to himself'] Christ's duties/office by force?' (ÆCHom II, 45, 344.300)

On her third example, given here in (3), Tomaszewska (2014: 69) writes that *teonan don* "seems to be a periphrastic (more emphatic) variant of the simple verb", apparently suggesting that *teonan* is a verb with *do*-support. However, *teonan* is a nominal form, the DAT.SG. of the *n*-stem *teona* 'damage, harm, hurt,'

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[2]   I refer to the lexeme as *dare* throughout. The 3SG.PRES.IND form is usually spelt <dear> or <dearr> in OE and <dar> in ME texts.
[3]   All OE examples are taken from the online corpus of the *Dictionary of Old English* (DOE Web Corpus), and the short titles follow the format of the corpus. Short titles and dates after ME and EModE examples are from the MED or OED. The glosses follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules.

etc. (Bosworth & Toller 1898: s.v. *tēona*). The collocation *to teonan*, which is
attested 17 times in the DOE Web Corpus, means 'in harm, to someone's
detriment', and *to* is a preposition.

(3)   *þætte   yfle   men   ne   dorston   nanwyht   to teonan*
       so.that   wicked.M.PL   men   not dared.PL   nothing   to harm.DAT

       don   for   hyra   egsan
       do.INF   for   them.GEN   fear.DAT
       'so that wicked men didn't dare do anything wrong [lit. 'in harm']
       because of fear of them' (HomS 1 (Verc 5), 80)

The fourth and last example may initially appear more convincing.
Tomaszewska (2014: 69) cites the clause in (4), which appears to have the
infinitive *to swerian* following the plural form *durran*:

(4)   … swa hi durran to swerian
           (LawNorthu, 57.2)

Such short text fragments out of context can be misleading, however, and some
more context reveals that *to* is in fact a verbal particle, cf. (5). Liebermann, the
editor of the Anglo-Saxon laws, even includes *toswerian* as a particle verb in
his glossary to the laws (Liebermann 1903–16: II, s.v. *toswerian* 'beschwören').

(5)   *&   we willað,   þæt man namige   on   ælcon*
       and   we want.PL.IND   that one appoint.3SG.SBJV in   each.N.DAT

       wæpengetace   II   triwe   þegnas   &   ænne
       wapentake.DAT   two trustworthy   thanes   and   one.M.ACC

       mæssepreost, þæt hi   hit gegaderian   &   eft   agifan,
       priest   so.that they it   gather.PL.SBJV   and   then pay.PL.SBJV

       swa   hi   durran   to   swerian
       such.as   they   dare.PL   to   swear.INF
       'And we wish that two trustworthy thanes and one priest be appointed
       in every wapentake, so that they will collect and hand it over [the Rome
       penny] such as they dare swear to' (LawNorthu, 57.2)

The pattern also occurs elsewhere in the Anglo-Saxon laws, cf. the example in
(6), where the particle *to* is placed before the finite verb *woldon*; hence, it is
clear that it cannot be the infinitive particle:

(6) &   *oðer*   *is,*   *þæt*   *gewitnessa*   *ne*   *mostan*
       and   second   is   that   witnesses   not   may.PL.PRET

       standan,   *þeah*   *hi*   *ful*   *getreowe*   *wæron*   *&*
       stand.INF   though   they   fully   truthful   were.PL   and

       hi   *swa*   *sædan,*   *swa*   *hi*   *to*   *woldon*   *swerian*
       they   so   spoke.PL   as   they   to   would.PL   swear.INF
       'And the second thing is that witnesses were not allowed to count although they were fully trustworthy and spoke such as they would swear to' (LawVAtr (D), 32.2)

To conclude, none of the four examples suggested for OE actually contain the infinitive particle *to*. Thus, the generalization that OE *dare* is only attested with the bare infinitive still holds (cf. Mitchell 1985: §996).[4]

However, *dare* did start to occur with the *to*-infinitive eventually – the question is when this pattern is first attested. Visser (1963–73: §1358) states that "No instances have been found earlier than the beginning of the 17th century" and cites an example from 1619, but this is only with reference to finite forms of *dare* in non-negated contexts. In later paragraphs (§§1359, 1367, 1368) Visser gives a number of examples from the sixteenth century, mostly from verse texts, like the example in (7) (also in OED, s.v. *dare* v.[1], 'Forms' 9.β):

(7) They sholde not have durst the peoples vyce to blame
      (1509 A. BARCLAY *Brant's Shyp of Folys* (Pynson) f. lxxxvi)

Visser (1963–73: §1366) also gives the fifteenth-century example in (8), which has been repeated in the literature several times (cf. Beths 1999: 1094; Traugott 2001: 9; Molencki 2005: 149):

(8) That none of youre officers roialle, nethir hir debitees or commissioneris, shalle darre..to take no bribe
      (c1475(?c1451) *Bk.Noblesse* (Roy 18.B.22) 72)

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[4]   This is also the case for another preterite-present verb, *þearf* 'need', despite claims to the contrary (Molencki 2002: 368; Loureiro-Porto 2009: 94; Tomaszewska 2014: 69, fn. 5). Molencki gives the following example of a *to*-infinitive from *Bald's Leechbook*: *Gif hit sie winter ne þearft þu þone wermod to don* (Lch II (2), 2.3.4). But *to don* is actually a particle verb meaning 'put in, add', as the preceding sentence in the text reveals: *gif hit sie sumor do wermodes sædes dust to* 'if it be summer, add dust of the seed of wormwood' (tr. Cockayne 1865: 181).

Presumably Visser found the example in the MED (s.v. *commissioner* n.), where, crucially, part of the sentence has been omitted. A look in the edition of the text reveals that *darre* is in fact followed by a simple infinitive, *doo* in (9).

(9)   And that none of youre officers roialle, nethir hir debitees or commissioneris, shalle darre doo the contrarie to take no bribe
            (Nichols 1860: 72)

Molencki (2005: 149) cites another fifteenth-century example, given here in (10), from Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Divine Love* (MS. c. 1450 according to the MED):

(10)   And I desired as I durste to hafe sum mare open declarynge wharewith I myght be hesyd in this

But *as I durste* here is a parenthetical ('as far as/to the extent that I dared'), and *to have* is the complement of *desired* rather than *durste*. This way of expressing humility occurs elsewhere in the *Revelations*, cf. (11), with the infinitive marker *for to* rather than just *to*.

(11)   I abade with reuerente drede, ioyande in that I sawe & desyrande as y durste for to see mare
            (Beer 1978: 46)

Beths (1999: 1094) points to another example, *dyrst* in the second clause in (12), which the MED (s.v. *durren* v., 1.b.) dates before 1500:

(12)   I dare wele say, To do the to deth they had not dyrst
            (a1500 *Man yff thow* (Cai 174/95) 39-40)

Note that this is a verse text and that the infinitive is preposed. In such contexts, practically all of the modals are attested with *to*-infinitives in ME, where there was a general tendency to mark the infinitive with *to* when it was fronted. Ohlander (1941: 65f) gives examples with *can*, *may*, *must*, *will*, and *shall*, such as 'yow to haten shal I nevere' (Chaucer *Troilus*, V, 1079). Thus, the example in (12) does not tell us anything about *dare* specifically, but rather about fronted infinitive phrases in ME in general.

    The first prose attestation in the OED, which Beths (1999: 1094) also mentions, is from a letter from the University of Oxford dated 1529 (OED, s.v. *dare* v.1, 'Forms' 9.γ):

(13)   They have dared to break out so audaciously
        (1529 in W. H. Turner *Select. Rec. Oxf.* (1880) 65)

This is the earliest example that I have found in the literature where the occurrence of *to* cannot be ascribed to metrical considerations or fronting of the infinitive. There may very well be earlier ones, and the exact starting point and circumstances of this development remain to be understood. What I hope to have shown here is that the OE and some of the ME attestations that have been suggested in the literature are unconvincing and rest on misinterpretations of the texts. In one case, (8) above, an inaccurate example given by Visser (1963–73) has been repeated uncritically in the literature at least three times, but simply looking it up in the edition showed that it was not an instance of *dare* plus a *to*-infinitive. It is to be hoped that the increasing availability of electronic corpora and digitalised text editions, tools which were not available when Visser wrote his historical syntax, will allow researchers to reach a better understanding of phenomena like the origins of the *dare to* pattern. However, it goes without saying that a better understanding presupposes correct readings of the relevant attestations.

3. Semantic 'bleaching' in Old English

Another important question in the history of *dare* is to what extent it was 'auxiliarized' in the Old and Middle English periods. One characteristic of *dare* which has been taken as evidence of an auxiliary status is its co-occurrence in OE with other 'courage' verbs like *gedyrstlæcan*, as in the example from Ælfric in (14). The translation into Present-Day English is from Beths (1999: 1081):

(14)   *Hwa   dear   nu   gedyrstlæcan, þæt   he   derige*
        who   dare.3SG   now   dare?   that he   harm.3SG.SBJV

        þam   folce
        that.N.DAT   people.DAT
        'Who would now dare to harm these people' (ÆHomM 14, 306)

Beths (1999: 1081) claims that this kind of co-occurrence "is characteristic of verbs undergoing grammaticalization and is an indication of the bleaching of the (lexical) meaning of the verb". Loureiro-Porto (2009: 69) and Tomaszewska (2014: 70) also take such attestations as indicative of semantic bleaching, and Los (2015: 112) writes that *dare* appears to have been "so bleached of lexical content" that examples like (14) are quite common. However, I believe a closer semantic analysis reveals that *dare* was functionally distinct from 'courage'

verbs like *gedyrstlæcan*, and that its meaning in (14) is not 'bleached' compared to when it occurs with other verbs.

In the OE record at least five different weak verbs, from three different roots, are attested with meanings like 'venture, be bold, presume': *gedyrstigan, (ge)dyrstlæcan, (ge)neðan, ge-/a-þristian*, and *(ge)þristlæcan*.[5] Some of them are attested both with and without the prefix *ge-*, as indicated by the brackets. It is not clear to what extent these verbs were used interchangeably, or whether different dialects had different preferences, but their frequencies in the written record differ considerably: According to the DOE, the form *aþristian* is attested only twice, while *gedyrstlæcan* is attested c. 125 times.

Of these five verbs, three were found attested with *dare* in the DOE Web Corpus, always with the prefix *ge-*: *gedyrstlæcan, geþristlæcan*, and *geneðan*.[6] All three verbs are attested with complement clauses (15) and directional expressions (16). In addition, noun phrase arguments after *gedyrstlæcan* and *geneðan* (17), and infinitives (with or without *to*) after *gedyrstlæcan* and *geþristlæcan* (18)[7] were found in this investigation.

(15)   COMPLEMENT CLAUSE
         Ne   eac   sceal   nan   mon   geþristlæcan,   þæt   he   aht
         not   also   shall   no   man   be.so.bold.INF   that   he   anything

         stiþlices   spræce   ongean   his   abbod
         harsh.GEN   say.3SG.SBJV   against   his   abbot.ACC
         'Furthermore, no one may be so bold that he says anything harsh to his abbot' (BenR, 3.16.2)

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[5] Beths (1999: 1081) and Tomaszewska (2014: 68) both consider *gedyrstlæcan* and *geþristlæcan* to be variants of the same verb, but they are actually derived from different roots, *dyrst-* and *þrist-*. The former also gives us OE *dyrstig* 'bold' and ultimately goes back to the same Proto-Indo-European root as *dare* (Rix 2001: s.v. **dhers-* 'Mut fassen'). The latter is related to another OE adjective, *þriste* 'bold', and German *dreist* 'bold, impudent', which according to Kluge & Seebold (2011: s.v. *dreist*) is derived from the same root as German *drängen/dringen*, OE *þringan* 'press, push' (Rix 2001: s.v. **trenk-* 'drängen').

[6] These also happen to be the three most frequent forms in the DOE Web Corpus, with c. 90 attestations (*gedyrstlæcan*), c. 50 attestations (*geþristlæcan*), and c. 20 attestations (*geneðan*), not counting glosses. It should be mentioned that *gedyrstlæcan* is more frequent partly because it occurs very often in the *Benedictine Rule*, which is included in the DOE Web Corpus in more than one version. If only one version is included (BenR, ed. Schröer 1885–88), the number of attestations falls to c. 70.

[7] There may also be an isolated example of *geneðan* with an infinitive, cf. Toller (1921: s.v. *ge-nēþan*, II.c.).

(16) DIRECTIONAL EXPRESSION
      Se   geneþeð   to   ærest   ealra   on
      it.M.NOM   venture.3SG   to   first   all.GEN.PL   into

      þam   eorðscræfe
      the.N.DAT   grave.DAT
      'It ventures into the grave first of all' (Soul II, 112)

(17) NOUN PHRASE ARGUMENT
      ne   he   nan þing   furðor   ne   gedyrstlæce,   þonne
      nor   he   nothing   further   not   undertake.3SG.SBJV   than

      him   from   his   abbode   beboden   sy
      him.DAT   by   his   abbot.DAT   instructed   is.3SG.SBJV
      'nor should he undertake [or 'presume to do'] anything else than what
      he is instructed by his abbot' (BenR, 62.111.20)

(18) INFINITIVE
      He   gedyrstlæhte   to   ganne   upon   ðære   sæ
      he   dared.3SG   to   walk   on   the.F.DAT   sea.DAT

      þurh   crist
      through   Christ
      'He dared [or 'ventured'] to walk on the water with the help of Christ'
      (ÆCHom II, 28, 227.197)

The three verbs are found both in assertive, cf. (16) and (18), and non-assertive
contexts, cf. (15) and (17). This already suggests that there may have been a
linguistic 'division of labour' between these verbs on the one hand and *dare* on
the other, for as Molencki (2002: 371ff) observes, *dare* in OE appears to have
been restricted to non-assertive contexts.[8] And while there are a few isolated
attestations of *dare* with other complement types, according to the DOE more
than 90% of the attestations are with infinitives.

   I believe that a comparison with another Germanic language, Present-Day
Danish, may shed more light on the OE situation, for it seems to show a very
similar pattern. Unlike OE or other ancient languages, a semantic analysis of a

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[8] Of the examples of *dare* given in the DOE (s.v. *dearr*), not a single one occurs in a non-negated
     declarative main clause. The two examples of 'affirmative' *dare* suggested by Tomaszewska
     (2014: 70) are misclassified; one occurs in a complement clause under negation, the other in an
     interrogative clause.

living language is obviously easier to carry out because native speaker intuitions are available (in this case, the intuitions of the linguist). While the fact that a living and an ancient language seem to show a similar pattern does not *prove* that the analysis of the ancient pattern is necessarily correct, it can at least be used to argue that the analysis in question is *possible*. Just like OE, Present-Day Danish has more than one verb expressing courage or audacity. The two verbs I will discuss here are the preterite-present verb *turde* 'dare' and the weak verb *vove* 'venture, dare, be bold', which are sometimes used together in the combination *turde vove*. Just as OE *dare*, Danish *turde* seems to be primarily used with infinitives in non-assertive contexts, while *vove* is also used in assertive contexts, and occurs with infinitives, with direct objects (e.g., *vove livet* 'risk one's life'), intransitively, and reflexively with directional adverbs (e.g., *vove sig ud* 'venture out'). To the best of my knowledge, there are no published linguistic studies on the meaning and use of these two verbs, so in the following, I rely on data from the free online corpus KorpusDK, which contains c. 56 million words of primarily written Danish from the period 1983–2002.

A preliminary search in KorpusDK confirms the profile of the two verbs sketched out above. Of the first 30 examples of *vove*, 11 occur in assertive main clauses like (20), and all of the four complementation patterns mentioned above are attested: infinitives, direct objects, intransitive uses, and reflexives with directional adverbs. On the other hand, all of the first 30 examples of *turde* take an infinitive or a pronoun standing for an infinitive, and none occur in assertive main clauses.[9] So while the two verbs clearly belong to the same semantic field, their usage differs, and even when used with infinitives they seem to express slightly different notions, as the examples in (19)–(20) suggest:

(19)   *Nogle   syntes,   det   var   godt,   at   hun   turde   græde*
        some   thought   it   was   good   that she   dared   cry.INF
        'Some people thought it was good that she dared [or 'had the courage']
        to cry' (KorpusDK, newspaper article, 1992)

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9   I follow Cristofaro (2003: 29ff) in regarding subordinate clauses as non-assertive. There are three main clause attestations of *turde* which at first glance appear assertive, but they all contain the modal particle *godt*, which is used to express contrariness to expectation, i.e., the negation of an expected negative clause. I would argue that such instances do not count as prototypically assertive. A few main clause occurrences of *turde* are found in expressions like *man tør nok sige* 'one dare say', which I have taken as idiomatic pragmatic markers rather than independent assertions.

(20) *Det er årets   første lune aften,   så vi vover*
      it   is   year.DEF.GEN first   warm evening so we venture

      at spise   udenfor
      to   eat.INF   outside
      'It's the first warm evening of the year, so we take a chance and eat outside' (KorpusDK, restaurant review, 1990)

One dictionary glosses *turde* 'have the necessary courage, not be afraid to do something' and *vove* 'risk, venture, allow oneself to do something' (ODS, qq.v.). As my translations in (19)–(20) suggest, there is a semantic distinction; *turde* indicates a mental state, that the necessary courage for an action is present, while *vove* means something to the effect of 'perform an action which is somehow risky or audacious'. When the two verbs are used together in the expression *turde vove*, these two meanings are combined, and it does not seem to me that *turde* here is semantically 'bleached':

      turde X   'have enough courage to do X'
      vove X   'do X, which is risky/audacious'; 'risk X'
      turde vove X   'have enough courage to do X, which is risky/audacious' or 'have enough courage to risk X'

So for instance, while (21) without *turde* would still express a lack of courage on the part of the City of Copenhagen, the use of *turde* makes explicit that it is for this reason that they will not take a chance:

(21) *Ikke mindst   af den grund   ville   det være befriende,*
      not   least   for that reason would   it   be   relieving

      hvis Københavns   Kommune   turde   vove   at lade
      if   Copenhagen.GEN   Municipality dared   risk.INF   to let.INF

      nye, friske og   forstandige   arkitektøjne   give
      new   fresh   and intelligent   architect.eyes   give.INF

      hver   deres   bud
      each   their   suggestion
      'Not least because of this, it would be of relief if the City of Copenhagen dared to take a chance and let new, intelligent architects have a fresh look and each give their suggestion' (KorpusDK, editorial, 2001)

The functional difference is even clearer in (22), where *vove* is used transitively. Taking out *turde* would mean that people actually risked their own skin; with *turde*, it only means that they had the courage to potentially do so:

(22) *Der*   *var*   *nogen,*   *der*   *turde*   *vove*
      there   was   someone   who   dared   risk.INF

      skindet   *for*   *friheden*
      skin.DEF   for   freedom.DEF
      'There were people who had the courage to risk their own skin for freedom' (KorpusDK, letter to the editor, 1991)

In light of these observations from Present-Day Danish, I would suggest that the OE patterns with *gedyrstlæcan*, *geþristlæcan*, and *geneðan* were similar, and that *dare* retained its usual meaning even when used with these other 'courage' verbs. While the verbs were obviously semantically close, just like Present-Day Danish *turde* and *vove*, they were not used in the same way. The verb *dare* was used to express a certain mental state – 'have enough courage to do X' – whereas the other three verbs had meanings like 'do X, which is risky/audacious'. The verbs *gedyrstlæcan* and *geþristlæcan* seem to have been used primarily to express excessive boldness or presumption, while *geneðan* primarily expressed risk.

In order to get a picture of the pattern I searched the DOE Web Corpus and found exactly 10 examples of *dare* followed by another 'courage' verb: four with *geþristlæcan*, three with *geneðan*, and three with *gedyrstlæcan* (also given in DOE, s.v. *ge·dyrst-lǽcan* 2.e). In one of the attestations *geneðan* is followed by a dative object, and in one *geþristlæcan* occurs with an infinitive, cf. (25)–(26) below. All of the remaining attestations are with complement clauses, such as in (23)–(24).[10]

The example in (23), repeated from (14) above, is mentioned by Beths (1999: 1081) and Los (2015: 112), both of whom gloss *gedyrstlæcan* as 'dare'. But the meaning here does not seem to be simply 'Who would now dare to harm these people', the translation suggested by Beths. Rather, *gedyrstlæcan* in this context – Ælfric's retelling of the Book of Esther – is better translated 'be so bold/presumptuous', implying impudence and defiance against the king rather than just courage, cf. the suggested translation in (23).

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[10]   In addition to (23)–(26), the other attestations are (Or 1, 10.30.16) and (Beo, 1933) for *geneðan*; (GD 2 (C), 7.115.25) for *gedyrstlæcan*; and (GD 1 (H), 4.39.4), (GDPref and 3 (C), 29.235.4), and (ThCap 1 (Sauer), 18.323.1) for *geþristlæcan*.

(23) COMPLEMENT CLAUSE

Se   cyning þa   andwyrde þære   cwene   þus   and
the   king   then   answered   the.F.DAT   queen.DAT   thus   and

eac   Mardocheo   swiðe   mildelice: Aman   ic   aheng
also   Mordecai.DAT   very   kindly   Haman   I   executed

and   his   æhta   þe   betæhte.   Hwa
and   his   property.ACC   2SG.DAT   gave   who

dear   nu   gedyrstlæcan,   þæt   he
dare.3SG   now   be.so.bold.INF   that   he

derige   þam   folce
harm.3SG.SBJV   that.N.DAT   people.DAT

'The king then answered the queen and Mordecai very kindly: "I have executed Haman and handed over his possessions to you. Who now dares to be so bold that he will harm that people [the Jews]?"' (ÆHomM 14, 303-306)

Another example with a complement clause is seen in (24), where *gedyrstlæcan* is supported by the degree marker *to þam* 'to that extent'. Again, *gedyrstlæcan* expresses more than just 'dare, have enough courage', and is used pejoratively with a sense of transgression and lack of authority:

(24) COMPLEMENT CLAUSE

Witodlice   þa   lareowas   þe   us   lar   of   com,
verily   the   teachers   REL   us.DAT   learning   from   came

hi   bododan   þam   hæðenum   and   þam   hetelum
they   preached   the.DAT   pagans.DAT   and   the.DAT   evil.DAT

ehterum,   and   heora   lif   sealdon   for   Godes
persecutors.DAT   and   their   lives   gave   for   God.GEN

geleafan; ac   we   ne   durran   nu   to   þam
faith   but   we   not   dare.PL   now   to   that.DAT

gedyrstlæcan,   þæt   we   Cristenum   cyninge   oððe
be.so.bold.INF   that   we   Christian.DAT   king.DAT   or

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Cristenum	*folce*	*Godes*	*beboda*	*and*
Christian.DAT	people.DAT	God.GEN	commands.ACC	and

Godes	*willan*	*secgan*
God.GEN	will.ACC	say.PL.SBJV

'Verily, the teachers that our knowledge came from preached to the pagans and the evil persecutors, and gave their lives for their faith in God; but we do not now dare to be so impudent that we will relate God's commands or will to a Christian king or Christian people' (ÆHom 19, 183)

In the example in (25), *geneþan* is used with a noun phrase argument in the dative with the meaning 'risk, put at stake', similarly to the use of *vove* in the Danish example in (22). The verb *dorste* in (25) expresses whether the necessary courage for this action was present:

(25)   NOUN PHRASE ARGUMENT

Selfa	*ne*	*dorste*	*under*	*yða*	*gewin*
himself	not	dared.3SG	under	waves.GEN	turbulence.ACC

aldre	*geneþan*
life.DAT	risk.INF

'[Unferð] himself did not dare to put his life at stake under the turbid waves' (Beo, 1468)

Finally, in (26) *geðristlæcan* is followed by a bare infinitive, i.e., the usual complementation pattern of *dare*, but again there appears to be a semantic distinction between the two verbs. King Alfred writes that he did not 'dare to presume' or 'dare to take the liberty' to write down many of his own laws. The verb *geðristlæcan* expresses the excessive boldness and arrogance of such an action rather than just having enough courage to do it – this meaning is, again, expressed by a form of *dare*:

(26)   INFINITIVE

Forðam	*ic*	*ne*	*dorste*	*geðristlæcan*	*þara*
therefore	I	not	dared.1SG	presume.INF	the.GEN.PL

minra	*awuht*	*fela*	*on*	*gewrit*	*settan,*	*forðam*
mine.GEN.PL	at.all	many	in	writing	put.INF	because

me	*wæs*	*uncuð,*	*hwæt*	*þæs*	*ðam*
me.DAT	was.3SG	unknown	what.NOM	it.GEN	those.DAT

lician	*wolde*	*ðe*	*æfter*	*us*	*wæren*
please.INF	would.3SG	REL	after	us	were.PL.SBJV

'I did not dare to take the liberty to put down in writing many of my own [laws], since it was unknown to me what of it would please those that are to come after us' (LawAfEl, 49.9)

If these readings are correct, it means that the semantics of *dare* in contexts like those in (23)–(26) does not differ from 'prototypical' uses like the one in (27), where the meaning is also 'have enough courage to do X':

(27)	*ic*	*ne*	*dear*	*beon*	*minum*
	I	not	dare.1SG	be.INF	my.M.DAT

	fæder	*ungehyrsum*
	father.DAT	disobedient.NOM

'I do not dare to disobey my father' (LS 7 (Euphr) 105)

However one prefers to analyze OE *dare*, I hope to have shown here that its co-occurrence with *gedyrstlæcan*, *geþristlæcan*, and *geneðan* does not indicate that it had 'bleached' semantics compared to other uses. Attestations like the ones in (23)–(26) above should thus not in themselves be taken as support for a highly auxiliarized status of *dare* in OE.

4. Concluding remarks

As I mentioned in the first section of this paper, a number of different interpretations of the history of *dare* have been suggested. It has been seen as an example of a lexical 'split', as a case of degrammaticalization, and as a shift from one auxiliary subgroup to another. However, most scholars seem to agree on one point, namely that *dare* is difficult to classify unambiguously both in OE and PDE. For instance, Duffley (1994) distinguishes between auxiliary and non-auxiliary uses of PDE *dare*, and Taeymans (2004) operates with three different types: the modal auxiliary *dare*, the 'semi-modal' full verb *dare to*, and 'blend constructions' where an 'auxiliary' feature (e.g., bare infinitive) co-occurs with a 'full-verb' feature (e.g., 3SG *-s*); cf. also Schlüter (2010: 293ff). Tomaszewska (2014: 73) writes that *dare* "displayed characteristics of both an auxiliary and a lexical verb already in Old English", and Beths (1999: 1105) introduces the term 'semilexical' to describe the OE verb.

When taken together, the arguments made in the above sections – that *dare* is not attested with *to*-infinitives in OE, and that there is no evidence for semantic bleaching – do not seem to resolve the issue. On the one hand, the absence of *to*-infinitives has been taken as an indication of auxiliary status, but on the other, the absence of semantic bleaching suggests that OE *dare* may not have been as auxiliarized as has been assumed in the literature. One may wonder, however, whether a formal characteristic like the presence or absence of the *to*-infinitive is really a good criterion for determining the grammatical status of a linguistic item at an earlier stage of the language. The absence of *to*-infinitives is used together with a number of other criteria to define a specific subset of auxiliaries in PDE (Quirk et al. 1985: §3.30), but it does not follow that the same definitional criteria can be applied to OE and ME. The status of the morpheme *to* has clearly also changed during the history of the language (Fischer 2000), but this is overlooked if one focuses on the development of *dare* in isolation. It seems to me that the emergence of the *dare to* pattern in late ME or early ModE could just as well be interpreted as increased grammaticalization of *to* rather than the decreased grammaticalization of *dare*.

I suspect that a more fruitful approach to the classification of verbs in earlier English may be to start with semantics and then investigate what formal generalizations, if any, can be made at different points in time. Dixon (2005) has proposed a basic distinction between PRIMARY VERBS and SECONDARY VERBS, where the former express an activity or state on their own and the latter provide semantic modification of other verbs. What is traditionally classified as auxiliaries fall into the category of secondary verbs, which includes not just modals, but also verbs like *try*, *begin*, and *hope*. From this semantic perspective, the story of English *dare* is one of stability rather than change: *dare* in both OE and PDE is classified as a secondary verb with the meaning 'have enough courage (to do something)'.[11] As I hope to have shown in this paper, *dare* was thus functionally distinct from other 'courage' verbs in Old English – but not bleached of meaning.

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[11]   There is an exception to this functional stability, namely the development of transitive *dare* (as in *I dare you*) in ModE, cf. Beths (1999: 1095f). I have suggested elsewhere (Gregersen 2017) that this pattern may actually be a continuation of the now obsolete verb *dare* 'frighten, mesmerize' (OED, s.v. *dare* v.²).

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