

# To dare larks: Analogy and interference in the English modals

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# PhD project

“De-auxiliarization in the Dutch and English modals: A comparative diachronic corpus investigation”

1. New nonfinites in Middle English?
2. ‘Degrammaticalization’ of *dare*?



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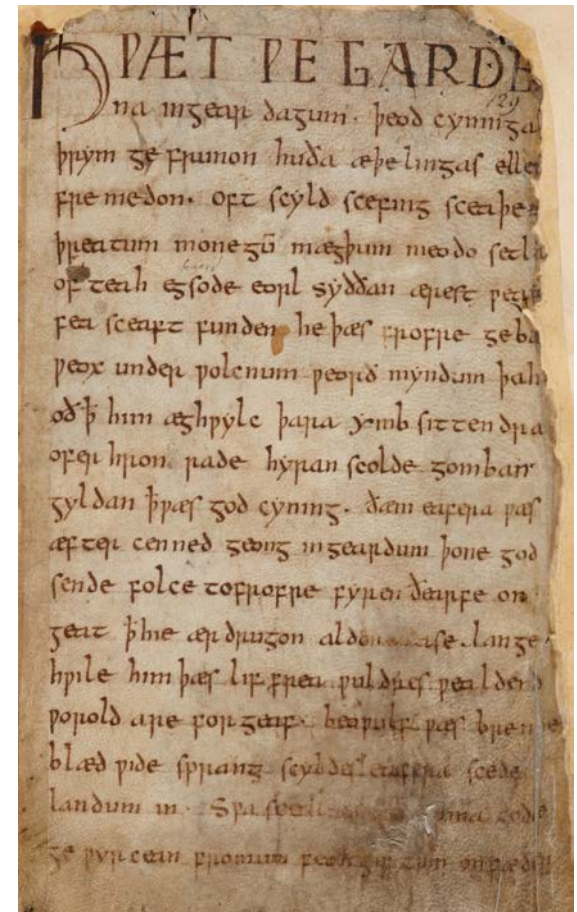
# Old English

c. 700–1100

Religious, legal, historical texts

*Beowulf*

York Corpus, DOE Corpus



Cotton MS. Vitellius A. xv, f. 132r  
Source: Wikimedia Commons/British Library

# Middle English

c. 1100–1500

Poetry, religious and  
scientific texts, letters

Chaucer: *Canterbury Tales*

Corpora e.g. PPCME2



Ellesmere MS., f. 153v  
Source: UWM Libraries

# Modern English modals

*can, could*

*may, might*

*must*

*shall, should*

*will, would*

*ought*

*(need)*

*(dare)*

No nonfinites (\**to can*)

No person marking (\**cans*)

‘Operators’ (+ infinitive)

# Old English modals

*Hwæt      scealt      þu      þinum      hlaforde?*

what.ACC owe.2SG.IND you.SG your.DAT lord.DAT

‘What do you owe your lord?’

DOE Corpus: ÆHom 17

# Old English modals

*hine        sceal        on domes dæg    gesceamian        beforan    Gode*  
him.ACC shall.3SG on Doomsday be-ashamed.INF before God.DAT  
'On Doomsday he shall stand ashamed before God'

Wulfstan 238.12 (Warner 1993: 123)

'Cline' of grammaticalization:

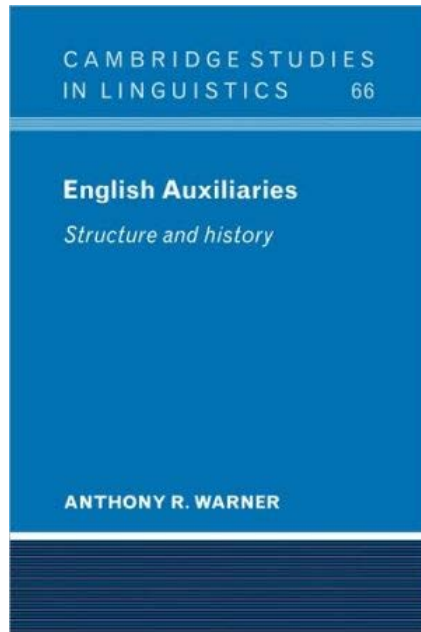
content item > grammatical word [e.g. auxiliary] > clitic > inflectional affix

Hopper and Traugott 2003: 7

# Question 1

New nonfinites in Middle English?

# New past participles



“past participles of DARE, MAY and WILL appear in the course of Middle English”

(Warner 1993: 101)

*I wold haue be thens yef I had mowte*

‘I would have been there if I had been able to’

c1500 (þ?a1475) *Assembly of Gods* (1896) 1951

# But: Increased periphrasis

In Old English “the past tense was employed to express any event that belonged to the past, including events for which we would now use a perfect or pluperfect”

Fischer & Van der Wurff (2006: 131)

Past participles per 1,000 words:

Old English (YCOE)	-1100	10.4
Early Middle English (PPCME2)	1100-1350	17.9
Late Middle English (PPCME2)	1350-1500	21.7

# Question 2

‘Degrammaticalization’ of *dare*?

# *Dare* in Modern English

Variable inflection	<i>s/he dare vs. s/he dares</i>
Variable infinitive	<i>dare go vs. dare to go</i>
Transitive use	<i>I dare you etc.</i>
(Variable <i>do</i> -support	<i>daren't vs. don't dare)</i>

“so this means you daren't give him anything now”

BNC (1993,S\_meeting)

“the draftsman did not dare to risk such Kafkaesque accuracy”

BNC (1990,W\_ac\_polit\_law\_edu)

# Degrammaticalization?

	Modern English	Middle English
inflection	variable ( <i>dare(s), dared</i> )	irregular ( <i>dar, dorst</i> )
infinitive	variable ( $\pm$ <i>to</i> )	without <i>to</i>
transitive	<i>I dare you</i> etc.	—

Beths (1999); Schlüter (2010):

Modern Eng. *dare* less grammatical than Middle Eng. *dar*

# A line of poetry



*Hys fraunchyse is large þat euer dard  
his privileg is large that ever ?*

*To Hym þat matz in synne rescoghe  
to him that makes in sin rescue*

*Pearl*, ed. Gordon (1953), ll. 609-10  
Cotton MS. Nero A.x (14<sup>th</sup> c.)

Cotton MS. Nero A.x, f. 37r  
Source: Wikimedia Commons

# Another *dare*

1. dare, v.<sup>1</sup> [View full entry](#)

●●●●●●●● c1000

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

2. dare, v.<sup>2</sup> [View full entry](#)

●●●●●●●● c1220

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

Oxford English Dictionary

*And at þat syȝt vche douth con dare*  
*‘And at that sight every host did tremble’*

*Pearl*, ll.839-40

# *Dare*, transitive verb

“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.”

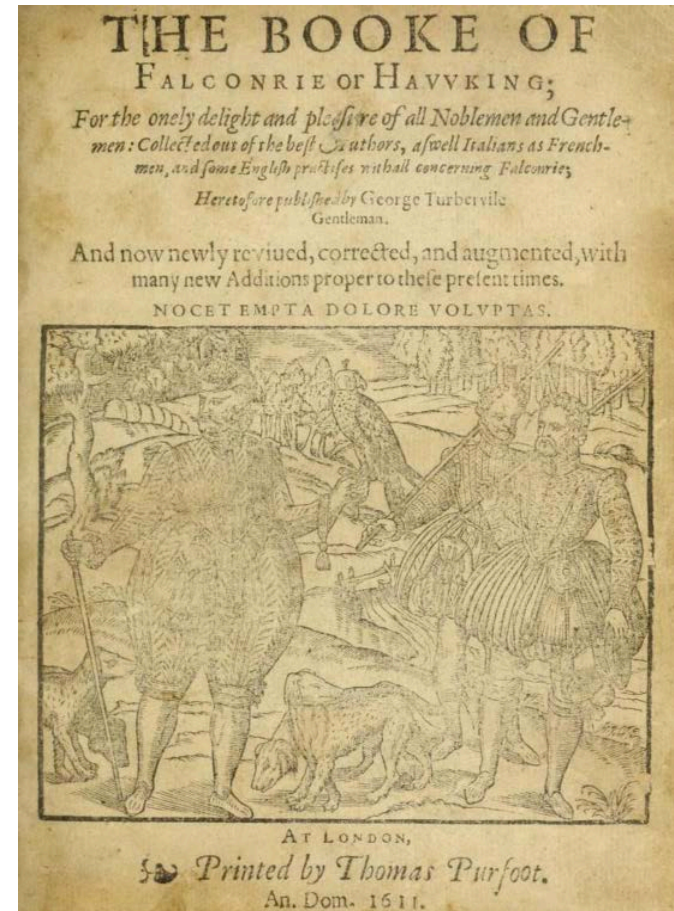
1551 T. Cranmer *Answer S. Gardiner* 121

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

Turbervile 1611 [1575]: 57

Turbervile 1611 [1575]

Source: Internet Archive/Boston Public Library



# Possible evidence

## Ambiguous examples

“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”

Lyly 1868 [1580]: 316

## Puns

“Enclos’d the bush about, and there him tooke  
Like darred larke, not daring up to looke”

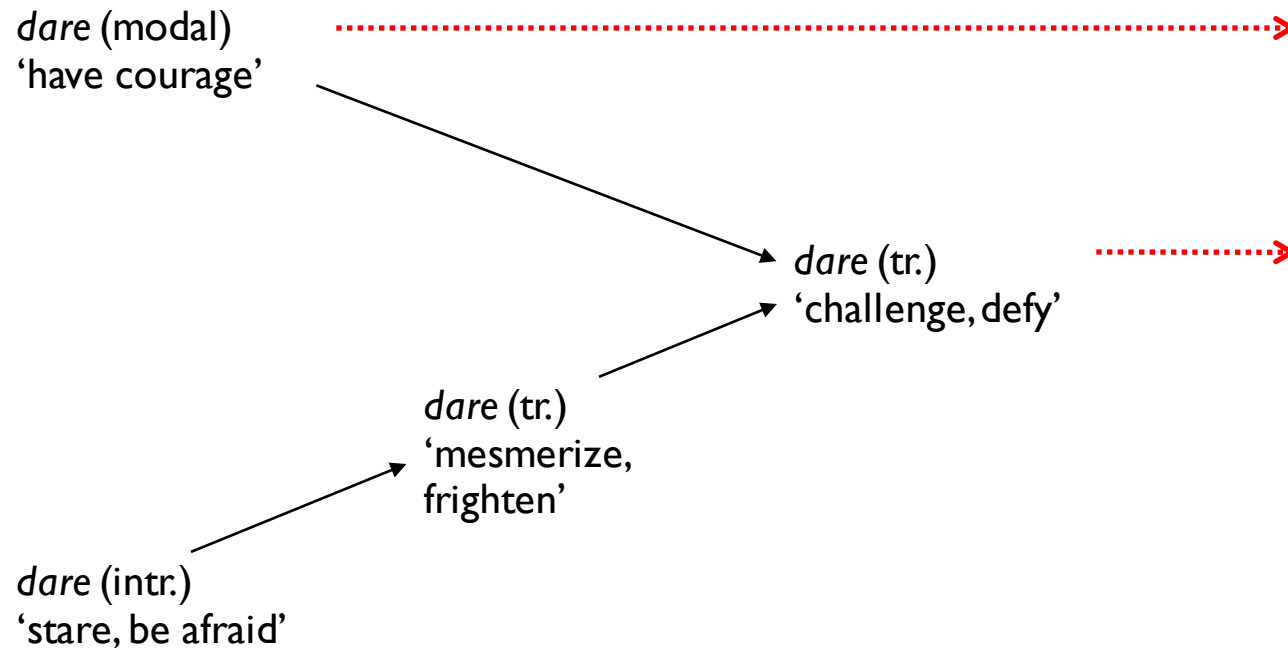
Spenser 1805 [1596]: 199-200

## Dictionaries

“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

# Hypothesis



# Summary

1. 'New' nonfinite forms in Middle English may reflect an increase in periphrastic tenses
2. New transitive use of *dare* may have developed through conflation with another verb (*dare* v.2)
3. Not just histories of individual lexemes – interference with the rest of the linguistic system

Thank you!



Cod. Pal. germ. 848, f. 7r

Source: Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg

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