The etymology of English to brag and Old Icelandic bragr

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Summary

The etymology of *to brag* is regarded as uncertain by the etymological dictionaries. I will argue here that we must assume a Scandinavian origin, which has been proposed before but was never generally accepted. The meanings of the Middle English forms and of the Scandinavian source forms are less far apart than has hitherto been assumed.[1]

1. English contains a number of monosyllabic words in *-ag*, such as *bag, brag, crag, drag, fag, flag, gag, hag, jag, lag, nag, rag, sag, shag, slag, snag, stag, swag, tag* and *wag*. They have different origins. Since a single intervocalic *-g-* in Old English became *-w-* in Middle English (e.g., *to draw* reflects OE *dragan*), the only possible Old English origin of the sequence *-ag* is OE *-agg-*, in which the voiced velar stop survived into Middle English. This is the general explanation of *stag* (from Old English *stagga*) and *shag*. Other Old English words in *-aggV* have disappeared from the standard language, such as OE *ceacga* 'broom', which is continued in modern dialects as *chag* 'branch of a tree; branch of a broom or gorse' (Wright 1898:554). The word *hag* 'very ugly old woman' is probably an abbreviation of OE *hægtesse* (cf. Barnhart s.v.).

2. Most of the words in *-ag* are loanwords post-dating the phonetic change of OE *-ag-* to ME *-aw-*. *Crag* (attested before 1325) was borrowed from Celtic, compare Welsh *craig* 'rock, stone'. Another donor language was Low German, the source of English *slag* (first attested in 1552). Yet the overwhelming majority of the words in *-ag* were borrowed from Scandinavian, especially from the dialects of the

settlers in England. According to Barnhart's etymological dictionary, this is certainly or probably the case with English *bag*, *to drag*, *flag* 'slab of stone', *rag*, *snag*, *to swag*, *to wag*, and perhaps with *to gag*, *to lag*, *to nag*, *to sag* and *tag*.

Of those last five words, there is no viable alternative for Scandinavian borrowing in the case of *to lag*, *to nag* and *tag*. The exact meaning of English *tag* (1400 *tagge* 'small hanging piece of cloth') may not be attested in Scandinavian, but the shift in meaning from Norwegian *tagg* 'point, prong, barb' and Swedish *tagg* 'prickle, thorn' to the English *tag* is unproblematic. The words *lag* (1530, compare Norwegian dialects *lagga* 'to go slowly) and especially *nag* 'irritate or annoy' (1825, compare Old Icelandic *nagga* 'to complain') might be distrusted because their first date of attestation is relatively recent compared to other Scandinavian borrowings, but the meanings correspond so closely that there can be no doubt about the origin of the English words. The verb *to sag* (1392 *saggen*) is conspicuous because of its internal voiced consonant, which neither the Scandinavian (Norwegian *sakke* 'slow down, lag behind', Swedish *sacka* 'settle; sink down') nor the Low Germanic (Middle Low German *sacken*, Early MoDutch *sacken*) correspondences show. Yet if the verb is indeed derived from the noun *sack* (as was defended recently by Lühr 1988:137f.), then we must posit a voicing of **-kk-* at some stage in order to arrive at voiced *-gg-*; and such a voicing is not or hardly known from Low Germanic or from English dialects, but voicing of single intervocalic **-p-*, **-t-* and **-k-* did take place in Old Danish (before 1300). It is conceivable that, for some reason, **sakken* participated in this voicing in the variety of Danish from which ME *saggen* was borrowed. Only for the verb *to gag* 'choke' (1440 *gaggen*) does a Scandinavian origin seem unlikely. We may regard it as an onomatopoeic formation, built from the same stem as Middle High German *gagen* 'to chatter' and English *to gaggle*; this Germanic stem **gag-* (as well as **gak-*) especially refers to the sound of geese.

3. There is only one word for which Barnhart's etymological dictionary is reluctant to assume a Scandinavian origin, namely *brag*. The *Middle English Dictionary* lists the following relevant forms, ranked according to their earliest dates of attestation:

adjective: *brag* 'ostentatious, proud; spirited, brave' (1325+)
noun: *brag* 'ostentation, pomp; pride, arrogance' (1387+)
verb: *braggen* 'to boast, brag' (1390+)
derived noun: *bragger(e)* 'an arrogant person' (1390+)

There is a gap of some sixty years between the first occurrence of the adjective 'proud; brave' and the first occurrence of the noun and the verb meaning 'to boast'. Barnhart concludes that the noun and the verb may have developed from the adjective, i.e. they are derivatives of the adjective, and I can only agree. Barnhart then proceeds to discuss the etymology of the word-form as follows:

> of uncertain origin; possible sources include Gaulish or Celtic *brâca* 'kind of trousers', and thence Provençal *braga* 'to wear rich clothes', and French (Swiss dialect) *braguâ* 'to boast or strut', but the French form appears some 300 years later than the English; alternatively a Scandinavian origin has been proposed (compare Old Icelandic *bragga sig* 'recover heart', *bragr* 'the best, the boast or toast of anything' and OIc. *brak* 'creaking noise'); however, the Scandinavian is weak in semantic association.

This discussion is unsatisfactory. We must reject all the alternatives for Scandinavian origin. Barnhart himself rejects the French form *braguâ* because it is attested too late. This is not the case with Provençal *braga*, but as we have seen above, the adjective *brag* is attested earlier than the verb in Middle English, suggesting that the verb is a derivative of the adjective. Therefore, it is unlikely that the adjective *brag* stems from a Provençal *verb*. Furthermore, it may be questioned whether a Romance form with single intervocalic *-g-* would yield Middle English *braggen*, rather than a form **bragen* which would acquire a long vowel in Modern English. The same two objections, plus the very long time gap, can be made against the connection with Gaulish = Celtic *brâca* (eventually the source of English *breeches* and Dutch *broek* 'trousers'): firstly, it is a concrete noun from which the adjective *brag* would have to be the oldest derivative; and secondly, I would expect the intervocalic consonant to yield a Middle English reflex *-k-* (if it was borrowed from a Celtic source which had preserved intervocalic **-k-*) or ME *-w-* (if it was borrowed before the ME period from a Celtic source which had lenited **-k-* to **-g-*, which would be more likely).

4. The scepticism concerning the connecting *brag* with Scandinavian is caused by the impression that the semantic association with the Scandinavian forms is weak. For *brag*, Barnhart operates with the single meaning 'boastful'. However, the *Middle English Dictionary* mentions five attestations of the adjective *brag*, for which it posits the meanings 'ostentatious, proud; spirited, brave'. In other words, 'boastful' does not cover all the actual meanings of *brag*. In the oldest attestation, the editor Brook (1948) translates *brag* as 'spirited, lively', and in The Romance of William of Palerne, the superlative *braggest* must be translated as 'bravest'. As I will argue below, the other attestation of *brag* in The Romance of William of Palerne also requires a translation 'bravely', rather than 'boastfully'. Thus, three of the five attestations show the meaning 'brave'. This leads me to the assumption that the meaning 'boastful' developed within 14th-century English from 'brave, spirited', and this makes the connection with possible Scandinavian sources much easier. But we shall first review the meanings of the Middle English attestations in their context:

AD 1325: The Harley Lyrics 2 (*Middelerd for Mon*), 51-53:
Sone beþ þis gomenes gon
þat makeþ us so brag ant bolde,
ant biddeþ us ben blyþe
'Quickly have these pleasures gone
which make us so spirited[2] and bold,
and invite us to be happy'

AD 1333: The Poems of William of Shoreham, p. 107, 249-251:
Prede syȝt under ragge
wel cobel and wel balgþ,
þat keþeþ wordes bragge
and countenaunces ȝaldeþ[3]
'Pride sighs under rags, very complacent (?) and well he swells (?),
who proclaims words boastfully, and keeps up (?) appearances'

AD 1335-1361[4]: The Romance of William of Palerne, 2352-2354:
Summe þat bere hem now brag schuld blede or even,
ac botles is now þis bale

'Some who now behave themselves bravely should bleed before the evening, and without remedy is now this sorrow'

These lines are pronounced by William, when he and his beloved Melior stand waiting for the provost and his men who are hunting them down. William laments that he should die although the two of them, disguised as white bears, have escaped so bravely from the court and from Melior's arranged marriage with the Greek emperor's son. Although most translators have rendered *brag* as 'arrogantly, proudly' (cf. Bunt 1985:357), it is very unlikely that William would call his own behaviour 'arrogant' or 'boastful'. 'Proudly' is a possible translation, but still seems inappropriate in the present context. I prefer to translate 'bravely'.

AD 1335-1361: The Romance of William of Palerne, 3047-3048:
On on þe kuddest kniȝt knowen in þis worlde,
best of his bodi, boldest and braggest in armes
'In the very most famous knight known in this world,
best of body, boldest and bravest[5] in arms'

AD 1393-1400: Pierce the Ploughmans Crede, 705-706:
Weren her confessiones clenli destrued
hy schulde nouȝt beren hem so bragg, ne +*belden so heyȝe*
'If their confessions were completely put aside,
they should not behave themselves so boastfully, nor build so high'

5. We will now take a closer look at the Scandinavian forms with which ME *brag* can be connected. There are several words in Old Icelandic, both in prose and in verse (cf. Fritzner 1886:175ff., Egilsson-Jónsson 1931:59, ONP:658f., 669f.), and one word which occurs only in Modern Icelandic. I divide them into two groups (a) and (b), according to their (possible) PGm. stem formation:

(a)
Bragi 'the god of poetry'
bragnar (m., pl.) 'men, heroes'
bragningr (m.) 'the first; descendant of Bragi'

These words continue an *n*-stem P(N)Gm. **bragan-*. The nominative plural *bragnar* shows the ending *-nar* which is also found in *gumi* 'man' and some other poetic words for 'man' or 'warrior' (cf. Noreen 1923:278). The noun *bragningr* is a more recent derivative on the basis of **bragan-* by means of the suffix **-inga-*. The singular *Bragi* must have acquired its specific deified meaning after the noun *bragr* had come to mean 'poem'[6] (see below); subsequently, the new meaning of the singular led to the restriction of the meaning 'hero' to the plural (*bragnar*), prompting the creation of a new formation *bragningr* for the singular. The use of *bragnar* is illustrated by the following passages:[7]

Grípisspá 27:
Fljóð's at Heimis fagrt álitum
hana Brynhildi bragnar nefna,
dóttir Buðla, en dýrr konungr
harðúðekt man Heimir fóðir
'A maid in Heimir's home there dwells, Brynhild her name to men is known,
daughter of Buðli, the doughty king, and Heimir fosters the fearless maid' (De Vries 1994 translates: 'she is called Brynhild among the crowd of heroes')

Hamðismál 24 (23):
Styrr varð í ranni, stukku ǫlskálir,
í blóði bragnar lágu komit ór brjósti Gotna
'In the hall there was clamour, the cups were shattered,
men stood in blood from the breasts of the Goths' (De Vries 1994 translates 'warriors')

(b1)
bragr (m.) 'poem; poetry' (the attested forms are nom.sg. *bragr*, acc.sg. *brag*, gen.sg. *bragar*)

The gen.sg. *bragar* shows that this noun continues an *i*-stem **bragi-*. The gen.sg. is also attested in several compounds, such as *bragarháttr* 'verse-form', *bragarmál* 'poetic language' and in the frequent *bragarfull*, 'full drinking vessel from which one drinks on the making

of a solemn promise' (ONP:658). *Bragarfull* literally means 'poem-cup' or 'cup of poetry', due to the fact that a toast can easily be conceived of as a poem (and in fact in skaldic poetry it often was).

Some dictionaries (Egilsson-Jónsson 1931:58, Cleasby-Vigfusson 1957:75) assume that *bragarfull* literally means 'the chief's cup', because it often refers to a toast brought by the king or in honour of a deceased king. This is then connected to the alleged translation of *bragr* as 'best' in two passages in the poetic Edda. However, I will argue below that there is no separate stem *bragr* 'the best' = 'the king'; therefore, *bragarfull* must contain the gen.sg. of *bragr* 'poem; poetry'. Its frequent use in connection with kings will be due to the fact that kings often have the right (or duty) to bring the first toast.

(b2)
bragr (m.) 'model'

There are three occurrences of a nom.sg. *bragr* for which a translation as 'poem' or 'poetry' is impossible. From its nom.sg. form alone, we are unable to say to which stem-class *bragr* belongs: it might reflect an *a*-stem **braga-*, but it could also be the *i*-stem **bragi-*. The first occurrence of this *bragr* is in prose, and it is glossed by ONP as 'pinnacle/ornament (the paragon) with respect to eloquence/the art of poetry'. The passage is the following (SnE 32[15]):

Bragi heitir einn (áss); hann er ágætr at speki ok mest at malsnild ok orðfimi ... ok af hans nafni er sa kallaðr bragr karla eða kvinna, er orðsnilld hefir framarr en aðrir, kona eða karlmaðr
'One is called Bragi (an As); he is famous for his wisdom and most for his eloquence and word-skill ... and from his name those of men or women are called *bragr*, who have more word-skill than others, a woman or a man'

The two remaining attestations are found in the poetic Edda, for which Fritzner 1886:177 adopts a translation of *bragr* as 'the best, foremost':

Skirnismál 33:
Reiðr's þér Óðinn, reiðr's þér ása bragr,

þik skal Freyr fiask:
En firinilla mær! es [þú] fengit hefr
gambanreiði goða
'Odin grows angry, angered is the best of the gods, Freyr shall be thy foe:
Most evil maid, who the magic wrath of gods hast got for thyself'

Sigurðarkviða in skamma 15:
Ein's mér Brynhildr ǫllum betri,
of borin Buðla, hón's bragr kvenna;
fyrr skalk mínu fjǫrvi láta,
an þeirar meyjar meiðmum týna
'More than all to me is Brynhild, Buðli's child, the best of women;
my very life would I sooner lose than yield the love of yonder maid'
(De Vries 1994 translates 'paragon of women')

Note that *bragr* here refers to a feminine pronoun, so that it is impossible that it represents an adjective **braga-* used as a substantive: in that case, we would expect the feminine form to have been used.

It seems to me that both attestations of *bragr* have the same meaning 'paragon' which the ONP assumes for the prose occurrence. De Vries has indeed translated *bragr* in Sigurðarkviða 15 as 'paragon' (Dutch *toonbeeld*). In Skirnismál 33, *ása bragr* can also be translated as 'paragon of gods', which means the same as 'the best of the gods'. The restriction 'with respect to eloquence/the art of poetry', which the ONP adds to the meaning of prose *bragr*, might also be present in this reference to Odin. This implies that all three attestations of *bragr* represent the nom.sg. of an abstract noun 'paragon, model'. Historically, there can be no doubt that this is the same noun as **bragi-* 'poem; poetry' which is more frequent in Old Icelandic. As I will argue below, the meaning 'poem' is probably derived from the meaning 'model'.

(b3)
Modern Icelandic *bragur* 'habit of life, custom, manner'

This word is found only in Modern Icelandic. Blöndal (1920-24) lists the following meanings: '1. stamp, tone, way of being, 2. habit, manner, custom, 3. poem, 4. verse-form, 5. melody.' Furthermore, it occurs in several compounds: *bónda-bragr* 'the ways of a farmer or a husband', *bæjar-bragur* 'habit or situation on a farm', *sveitar-bragr* 'the prevailing fashion in an area', and others.[8] We may safely regard *bragur* as a modern descendant of **bragi-* 'model', which still stands close to the original meaning. This was also argued by Bugge (1888:199f.), who points to the existence of the cognate *brag* 'way of being' in Norse dialects:

> *'bragr* bedeutet 'ursprünglich' nicht nur 'der Trefflichste' sondern auch 'ratio agendi', 'Art des Betragens', 'Manier'. (...) Dass diese Bedeutung volkstümlich war, wird durch die Anwendung des Wortes in der neuisländischen und neunorwegischen Volkssprache bewiesen. (...) In mehreren inneren Landschaften und Küstengegenden des südwestlichen Norwegens bedeutet *brag* masc. 'Art des Betragens, Beschaffenheit'.

In the various stages of Norwegian, Danish or Swedish, I have found no descendants of **bragi-* 'model', 'poem' or of **bragan-* 'hero'. It might be argued that a remnant of **bragi-* survives in Danish *bragebæger* and Swedish *bragebägar*, the East Scandinavian counterparts of OIc. *bragarfull*; however, the lack of *i*-mutation in Danish suggests that these nouns were built secondarily on the basis of the god's name *Bragi*.

6. The Proto-Germanic etymology of Scandinavian **bragi-/an-* is regarded as unclear. However, there is one Scandinavian verb which matches *bragr* in form and which seems to contain the right semantics, viz. OIc.[9], MoIc. *braga* 'to flicker' (of the northern lights), which also occurs in Modern Norwegian *braga* 'to blaze' and Swedish dialects *braga* 'to tremble' (cf. de Vries 1977). A derivative of this verb is the Norwegian dialect form *bragla*, which means 'to blaze, flash' in Gudbrandsdal and Inderøy, and 'to show off, display' in Gudbrandsdal and Østerdal (cf. Torp 1919). The verb *braga* must represent the Verner variant **bragan-* of the PGm. verb **breχan-*, which is reflected in OIc. *brjá* 'to shine, shimmer' and Middle High German *brehen* 'to sparkle' (Noreen 1923:231).

Lühr (1988:99) has tentatively connected these words with a number of German and Dutch verbs of the structure *brVng/k-* and

the meaning 'to show off', under the assumption that 'to show off' is a derived meaning of 'to shine, shimmer': Middle Dutch *bronken, brunken* 'to boast', MHG *brunken* 'to show', MoDu *pronken* 'to parade' < **brunkan-*; MHG *brangen*, MoHG *prangen* 'to parade, show off, show off' < **brangan-*.[10] The meaning 'to show off' can easily have developed from 'to shine', as in fact has happened in the Norwegian dialects in which *bragla* has come to mean 'to show off'. In a few cases, **brunkan-* has acquired a negative connotation, e.g. in Middle Dutch *bronken* 'to sulk', Early MoD *pronken* 'obnubilare vultum' (Kiliaan). Since 'sulking' is made apparent by means of facial expression, *bronken* confirms that the original meaning of the verb was 'to show (ostentatiously)'. One verb has remained outside this discussion but should definitely be involved in it, viz. Middle High German *brogen* 'to show off' < **brugan-*; it occurs frequently throughout the MHG period. Within Continental WGm., it is the only verb of this stem without prenasalization of the velar; this brings it closer to the Scandinavian forms *braga* and *bragr*.

Summarizing the evidence gathered here, I reconstruct the following verbal and nominal formations for North- and West-Germanic:

NGm.	**bragan* 'to shine, shimmer'	OIc. *braga*
WGm.	**brug-* (preterite of **breχan* ?)	MHG *brogen*
NGm.	**bragi-* 'model', 'poem'	OIc. *bragr*
NGm.	**bragan-* 'hero', 'god of poetry'	OIc. *Bragi, bragnar*
WGm.	**brangan-* 'to show off'	MHG *brangen*
WGm.	**brunkan-* 'to show off'	MHG *brunken*

There is a difference in ablaut grade between **brag-* and *brug-* which matches the productive pattern of the third class of strong verbs. North-Germanic contains a noun **bragi-* and an *n*-stem **bragan-*, which may be regarded as deverbal, or from which the verb **bragan* was derived. West-Germanic has two verbs with prenasalization, one from each ablaut grade. The development of the meanings of most of these words is unproblematic: from PGm. 'to shine, shimmer', WGm. has derived the meanings 'to show off' (*brogen, brangen, brunken*) and 'to draw faces', 'to sulk' (*bronken*), whereas in NGm., 'to flicker, blaze' (*braga*) adheres more closely to the original meaning.

7. The meanings of the North-Germanic nominal forms **bragi-* and **bragan-* seem more difficult to rhyme with PGm. 'to shine, shimmer'. However, if we assume that the verb **bragan* had acquired the meaning 'to show, display' which is found in the Dutch and German derivatives of the PGm. root, the reconstructed North-Germanic stems can be explained as **bragi-* 'display' and **bragan-* 'who displays', respectively:

OIc. *bragr* 'model', 'poem'. The meaning 'paragon' of the original abstract noun **bragi-* in *ása bragr* and *bragr kvenna* can be paraphrased as 'showpiece'. The meaning 'poem', 'poetry' of the same noun receives quite a natural explanation if we assume that the poem was called the 'display' of a story, viz. by speaking out loud.

MoIc. *bragur* 'habit, custom' can also be paraphrased by the meaning 'display', because 'habits' are activities which strike the observer as noteworthy.

NGm. **bragan-* 'hero' is a 'displayer', someone who displays his power or courage.

8. We can now fill in more details concerning the borrowing of Scandinavian *bragr* as Middle English *brag* 'brave; boastful'.[11] As we have seen, there is evidence that *brag* in its first ME attestations did not yet mean exclusively 'boastful', but also, and more generally, 'brave'. Since the negative connotation of 'boastful' is absent from the Scandinavian sources, it is likely that 'brave' was indeed the original meaning of *brag* when it was borrowed into English. 'Braveness' is an important element of the OIc. *bragnar* 'heroes', and it is also present in the meaning 'paragon' of *ása bragr* and *bragr kvenna*. In Middle English, the meaning 'brave, spirited' of the oldest attestations subsequently changed into 'boastful'. Another instance of this semantic shift is found in English *proud*: Romance **prōdis* 'good, favourable' > Old French *prud, prod* 'valiant, gallant' → Middle English 'stately, grand' > MoE *proud*.

More support for the view that the Scandinavian word still had the meaning 'brave' or 'hero' when it was borrowed into English can be found in two of the meanings which Wright 1898 lists for the word *brag* in the northern dialects of Northumbria and Durham. The first one is 'goblin', which may be explained as the Scandinavian 'hero' (or

'poet' ?) which was banned to the dark side of folklore. The second one is the transitive verb *to brag* meaning 'to challenge, defy', which implies 'to act bravely' and which, by the fact that challenging mostly involves speaking out orally, reminds us of the meaning 'poem' in Scandinavian. Examples of this use as given by Wright are *And they might hae bragged the Border side* (from Scott), *A boy climbing a tree is said to do it to brag his companions*, and *We bragged him to a race*.

These dialect forms also solve the last small problem of my explanation, viz. the absence in Scandinavian of an adjective *bragr* from which the ME adjective might be a direct borrowing. We must assume one or more intermediate steps. However, the northern English forms *brag* 'goblin' and *to brag* 'to challenge' indicate that there probably were several different borrowings of the form *brag* in ME before its first attestation in a text in 1325. Since Scandinavian words have been borrowed into English from the late ninth century onwards, it is conceivable that some of the English forms in *brag* preserve lexical material which was lost in Old Icelandic; furthermore it is possible that the English borrowings stem from an East Norse dialect as opposed to West Norse Icelandic; finally we must reckon with a couple of centuries of possible semantic and grammatical change of the borrowed word(s) within English itself.

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Notes

1. I am indebted to Andrea de Leeuw van Weenen for advice in matters of Old Icelandic philology.
2. The translation 'spirited, lively' is given by Brook 1948 in his glossary.
3. The words *cobel*, *balgþ* and *ȝaldeþ* are hapaxes. Konrath (1902) proposes to emend them to *nobel*, *bald* and *chald* 'cold', respectively, but this has not been generally accepted. The meanings given here for *cobel* and *balgþ* , including the question marks, are taken from the MED. For

ȝaldeþ, which is without explanation (the MED has not reached the letter *y-* yet), one might consider an emendation to **haldeþ* 'holds', cf. the expression *holden co(u)ntenaunces* 'to keep up appearances'.

4. This approximate date for the composition of *Palerne* is given by Bunt 1985:15.
5. The translation 'bravest' is given by Skeat 1867a in his notes, and this has been adopted by other editors.
6. Another argument for the recent character of the meaning 'god of poetry' is mentioned by De Vries 1977 s.v. *Bragi*: "Auffallend ist daß der Name des Gottes auch als P[ersonen]N[ame] auftritt, sowohl an. wie aschw. *Bragi*; das dürfte auf den sekundären Charakter des Götternamens hindeuten."
7. The text of the passages is based on Sijmons 1906, except for the third half-line of Hamðismál 24 (23), where I follow the emendation adopted by De Boer 1922 and Neckel-Kuhn 1962. The English translations are adopted from Bellows 1936.
8. Cleasby-Vigfusson 1957 list these compounds as OIc. (ending in *–bragr*), but this is erroneous.
9. Its attestation in OIc. is not certain. ONP:657 mentions only one passage, where it is conceivable that the verb form *bragar* is an error for **bragðar*. Fritzner mentions no other attestations, whereas Egilsson-Jónsson ignore *braga* altogether.
10. The variants with *-nk-* are called 'intensives' by Lühr (1988:363, 365) but a satisfactory explanation of the interchange *-ng-* : *-nk-* still has to be found. Initial *p-* may be due to the analogical influence of a different verb stem which had PGm. **p-* (cf. Got. *ana-praggan* 'to oppress').
11. In view of the Continental West-Germanic evidence for a verb meaning 'to show off', it might be argued that English *brag* represents an inherited formation after all. This would have to be an unattested Old English form **bragga*. Although this can never be ruled out completely, it seems quite unlikely. Firstly, German and Dutch show only verbs, no original nominal forms. Secondly, no cognate verb form occurs in Old or Middle English. Thirdly, no German or Dutch or Scandinavian form of this root is attested with a geminate consonant, either voiced or voiceless: we find only **-g-*, **-ng-* and **-nk-*.

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