OLD ENGLISH NOUN DECLENSIONS

ABSTRACT

The Old English declensions have traditionally bewildered students for various reasons, but perhaps two of these merit special attention. (1) The apparent incoherence between the 'historic' labels attached to them in the light of historical reconstruction and their actual forms as they appear in the language. (2) The fact that many students of Old English have had some training in Latin -a language with neat and clearly marked paradigms. This obviously makes it even more puzzling for them to understand the 'historic' labels of the Old English declensions let alone the actual 'Indo-European' links between one declension system and the other. This paper aims at clarifying the situation and purports to justify both the labellings and the historic links in a comparatively simple way.

O. INTRODUCTION

The 'historical' labels attached to the OE. noun declensions have traditionally bewildered beginners to the subject. They appear to them opaque or, worse still, confusing. So, the newcomer to the field faces, for example, the great 'A declension' of masculines and neuters (including the stems in -JA and -WA) and the also great 'Ŏ declension' of feminine nouns (including the stems in -JŎ and -WŎ), when the fact is that the N. s. of the great 'A declension' appears without any -a ending at all and the N. s. of the great 'O declen-

27

sion' appears in some cases with a final *-u* and in other cases without any final vowel whatsoever. It is not necessary to mention here the long list of 'A masculines and neuters' (*se cyning, se song, thaet bearn, that huµs*, etc.) nor the equally long list of 'O feminines' (*seµo giefu, seµo laµr*, etc.). The puzzle presented by such labels (A declension, O˘ declension) is aggravated by the observation made in many handbooks that the OE. 'A declension' corresponds to the 'second Latin declension' (masculines in -US and neuters in -UM whereas the OE. 'O˘ declenslon' corresponds to the first Latin declenslon (feminines in -A). The situation is similar with regard to the other old Germanic languages. Schematically then we have:

GERMANIC (OE. included)	LATIN
masculines in -A =	masculines in -US (cf. Gk. OS)
neuters in -A =	neuters in -UM (cf. Gk. -ON)
feminines in - O˘ =	feminines ln -A (cf. Gk. -A)

Clever students must surely be intrigued both by the 'labels' attached to the OE. declensions and even more so by the correspondence posed if they are not accompanied by some explanation. A knowledge of Latin does not solve the problem at all. On the contrary, it may frustrate the interested student even more. Note that Latin is a language with neat and clearly marked paradigms (first declension in -A: *rosa. porta, puella ...*, second dclension in -US, UN: *hortus, lupus, templum, donum …*). as against the OE. state of affairs. On the other hand, the rather limited school acquaintance with the common Indo-European origin of Latin and Germanic, even though revised in most University syllabuses, is not enough to solve the riddle of the correspondences. It is these considerations that have moved me to make known some personal reflections on the subject of the OE. declensions, always bearing in mind the needs and frequent perplexity of our pupils. The historical data that we need have not completely disappeared from the OE. paradigms. Although scarce, they are a perennial testimony to the past. I shall

concentrate on the the two great declensions I have already referred to. This will confirm the validity of the correspondences and provide a justification for the 'historical labels'.

1. A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE OE. NOUN DECLENSIONS

The two 'great' OE. declensions we have referred to are also known as the two great 'vocalic declensions' because of their vowel stem. They are the most important of the so-called strong declensions (the term 'strong' is not a particularly happy one and refers to their relative degree of inflectional complexity). These two 'great' OE. declensions and the so-called weak declension of nouns constitute the great bulk of OE. nouns. The 'weak' declension has an 'N stem' and corresponds to one of the various types of consonant stems that we have in the third Latin declension. Cf. N. s. *nomen*, G. s. *nominis*, which corresponds exactly to OE. N. s. *nama*, G. s. *naman*. From the point of view of the beginner, the OE. weak declension of nouns is easy and neat, since the N,s. is always -a in masculine nouns and -e in feminine and neuter nouns (there are only three neuter nouns in this declension). Cf., for instance, *se nama*, already mentioned, *se moμna, se wita, seμo sunne, seμo heorte, thaet eμare, that eμage.*

In addition to the three great declensions considered so far, the two great strong vocalic declensions and the great weak declension (or 'consonant declension'), there are other strong vocalic declensions with fewer elements. Two of these, although with comparatively few elements, are nevertheless traditionally considered 'major declensions' together with the three 'great ones'. The two declensions concerned are the so-called 'I declension', and the so-called 'U declension', which correspond to the third and fourth Latin declensions respectively, both with vowel stem. (Remember that the OE weak declension in 'N' also corresponded to the third Latin declension but, of course, to one of its consonant varieties). As I have said, there are few

recorded OE. nouns that belong to these declensions. Only nine nouns are known to belong to the 'U declension'. This is due to the fact that many of the nouns that originally belonged to this declension have joined the great 'A declension' and 'O declension' and follow their inflectional patterns.[1] The same applies to the 'I declension'. Examples of elements still remaining in the 'I declension' are *se wine, se cyre, se lyre …,* with *-e* as a relic of a stem in -I, *seμo dæμμd, seμo speμd, seμo tÈμd …,* without any visible testimony of stem vowel -I. Examples of the 'U declension' are *se sunu, se sidu, seμo duru …* with maintenance of the stem vowel -U, and *seμo hand* with no visible testimony of stem vowel -U.

The remainder of the OE. declensions, known as 'minor declensions', are outside our scope.

THE OLD ENGLISH NOUN DECLENSIONS
(EXCEPTING THE 'MINOR DECLENSIONS')[2]

The great declensions by reason of the number of elements: 'A declension' (masc. *cyning, biscop …,* neut. *bearn*, *scip* -N. Ac. pl. *scipu-*);'O declension' (fem. *giefu, laμr, weard*); 'N declension' or 'consonant declension' or 'weak declension' (masc. *moμna*, G. s. *moμnan*; fem. *sunne*, G. s. *sunnan*; neut. *eμare*, G. s. *eμaran*.

Other so-called 'major declensions': 'I declension (masc. *wine*, fem. *dæμμd*, neut. *gedrync*); 'U declension (masc. *sunu.* fem. *duru, hand*).

---

[1] de la Cruz, J., 1986: *Iniciacioån Praåctica al Ingles Antiguo*, Madrid, p. 23.

[2] de la Cruz J, 1983: La Prosa de los Anglosajones, Maålaga and Salamanca, p. 298.

2. THE OLD ENGLISH NOUN DECLENSIONS WITHIN THE INDO-EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK

Needless to say, the correspondence between the 'great' OE. declensions and the Latin declensions is not an exclusive phenomenon of these languages. It can also be found if we compare any two or more of the old Indo-European languages. In point of fact, a certain amount of 'reconstruction' is possible thanks to the comparative method. Such reconstruction is what enables us to say that the basic OE. noun declensions with the historical lables 'A declension', 'O declension', 'I declension' and 'U declension' are the OE. representatives of the Indo-European nominal flexion with vowel stem, which of course has other representatives in other Indo-European languages, for instance, Latln. The same applies to the OE. weak noun declension with consonant stem ('N declension'). Cf. the following distribution:

(I) DECLENSIONS WITH PURE STEM VOWEL

Indo-European -A˘ = Germanic and OE. O˘. Note that the Indo-European vowel is long and does not correspond to Germanic short A. IDE. A˘ corresponds to Germanic O˘! The declension concerned corresponds to the first Latin declension. The quality changes but the quantity is maintained (at least originally).

Indo-European -O = Germanic and OE. A. Note that the Indo-European vowel is short and does not correspond to Germanic O˘. IDE. O corresponds to Germanic A! The declension concerned corresponds to the second Latin declension. The quality changes but the quantity is maintained.

Indo-European -I (there is also stem vowel -I ˘ = Germanic and OE. I. The declension concerned corresponds to the third Latin declension.

Indo-European -U (there is also stem vowel -U˘). The declension concerned corresponds to the fourth Latin declension.

31

(II) DECLENSIONS WITH CONSONANT STEM

1/ IDE. plosive, 2/ IDE. -S, 3/ IDE. nasal = Germanic and OE. N,[1] 4/ IDE. liquid, 5/ IDE. mixed group of 3/ and 4/.

3. CORRESPONDENCE AND CHANGE

It is self-evident that a considerable percentage of the words of the Indo-European languages share one and the same root. One significant case is the Indo-European root ULQUO-/LUQUO-[2] 'wolf' with IDE. 'O stem':

(Singular)
N. *ulquos/luquos, OE. wulf,[3] L. lupus;[4] Ac. *ulquom/luquom, OE. wulf, L. lupum; G. *ulquosio/luquosio, OE. wulfes, L. lupÈμ;[5] D. *ulquoμi/luquoμi, OE. wulfe, L. lupoμ; Abl. *ulquoμd/luquoμd, L. lupoμ.

(Plural)

---

[1] This is the stem of the so-called 'weak declension'. There are other consonant stemmed declensions. See reference in note 2.

[2] Sanskrit *vrkah*, Lithuanian *vilkas*, and Goth. *wulfs*, etc., represent IDE. *ULQUO. L. *lupus* and Gk. *lykos* represent IDE. *LUQUO. The only difference between IDE. *ULQUO and IDE. *LUQUO is the metathesis 'UL-/LU-'.

[3] The <f> does not represent the regular development of IDE. *QU- as illustrated in cases llke IDE. *QUO- = Goth *hwas* 'who', OE. *hwaμ*. The <f> of *wulf* is due to labial assimilation by reason of a preceding [w].

[4] This is not the regular development of IDE. *QU- in Latin. Cf. L. *quis, quinque*, etc., whlch lllustrate the ordinary development of IDE. *QU- in Latin as against Osco-Umbrian <p>: Osco-Umbrian *pis* = L. *quis* 'who'. L. *lupus* 'wolf' must be a loan-word from Osco-Umbrian.

[5] Note the the elements in square brackets are all innovations. See explanation in the sections dealing with the first and second Latin declenslons.

N. *ulquôs/luquôs, OE. wulfas, L. lupi; Ac. *ulquoµns/luquoµns, OE. wulfas, L. lupoµs; G. *ulquôm/luquôm, ingl. ant. wulfa, L. lupoµrum, D. /Abl.[1] OE. wulfum, L. lupÈµs.

We can see a perfect coincidence of stem and paradigm: OE. *wulf* and L. *lupus*. They do not only share the same root and stem but also follow the same declension pattern. Nevertheless, given the vicissitudes of linguistic evolution, we should not be surprised if elements which share one and the same Indo-European root do in fact follow one inflectional type in one language and quite a different one in another. An interesting case is that of OE. *wylf* and L. *lupa* 'she-wolf'. They certainly share the same root which they in turn share with *wulf* and *lupus*. The only difference between both sets is the stem vowel. It so happens, however, that OE. *wylf* and L. *lupa* do not exactly represent the same stem. L. *lupa* is a comparatively recent formation with a pure 'A stem', whereas OE. *wylf* represents a stem in 'JA˜' = Germanic 'JO˜'. Note also that *wylf* 'she-wolf' shows the effect of i-mutation (hence the vowel <y* as against *wulf* 'wolf'. Cf. OHG. *wulpa* 'she-wolf' anf Skt. *vrkÈµ* 'she-wolf'. Here follows the complete paradigm of IDE. *ULQUIA˜ 'shewolf', with 'JA˜' stem, and their equivalents in Old English and Latin:

(Singular)
N. ulquiaµ *ulqui´ *ulquÈµ,[2] OE. wylf, cf. L. lupa; Ac. *ulquiaµm *ulqui´m *ulquÈµm, cf. L. lupam; G. /Abl. *ulquiâs, OE. wylfe, cf. L. [lupae; D. *ulquiaµi, OE. wylfe, cf. L. lupae. (Plural) N. ulquiâs, OE, wylfa, cf. L. [lupae; Ac. *ulquiaµns, OE. wylfa, cf. L. lupas; G. *ulquiâm, OE, wylfa, cf. L. [lupaµrum; D. Abl. OE. wylfum, cf. L. [lupÈµs.

---

[1] Some languages show a -bh- ending while others show an -m- ending. The latter is the case of Germanic.

[2] Cf. OHG. *wulpa* < *wulbi*, and Sanskrit *vrkÈµ*.

As a matter of fact, many elements correspondlng to one and the same Indo-European root do not necessarlly follow the same lnflectional pattern in the various Indo-European languages. Cf. the following examples of corre‐spondence 'Latin - Gothic - Old English'

L. *genus, generis* (neuter, 3rd decl., stem '-S') - Goth. *kuni, kunjis* (neuter, decl. vowel stem '-JA' = 2nd L. decl. in '-UM') - OE. *cynn, cynnes* (neuter, decl. vowel stem '-JA' = 2nd L. decl. in '-UM)'.

L. *pecus, pecoris* (neuter, 3rd decl., stem '-S') - Goth *faiåhu, faiåhaåus* (neuter, decl. vowel stem '-U' = 4th L. decl. in '-U') - OE. *feoh, feμos* (neuter, decl. vowel stem '-A' = 2nd L. decl. in '-UM').

L. *cor, cordis* (neuter, 3rd decl., stem 'plosive') - Goth. *haiårto, haiårtins* (neuter, decl. consonant stem '-N' or 'weak declension' = 3rd L. decl. in 'nasal') - OE. *heorte, heortan* (feminine, decl. consonant stem '-N' or 'weak declension' = 3rd L. decl. in 'nasal').

L. *auris, auris* (feminine, 3rd L. decl., stem 'llquid') - Goth. *aåusoμ aåusins* (neuter, decl. consonant stem '-N' or 'weak declension' = 3rd L. decl. in 'nasal') - OE. *eμare, eμaran* (neuter, decl. consonant stem '-N' or 'weak declension' = 3rd L. decl. in 'nasal').

L. *dens, dentis* (masculine, 3rd L. decl., stem 'plosive') - Goth. *tunthus, tun-thaåus* (masculine, decl. vowel stem '-U' = 4th L. decl. in 'US') - OE. *toμth, toμthes* (masculine, decl. with 'morphemic mutatlon' in G., D., singular and N., Ac., plural).

L. *pes, pedis* (like *dens*) - Goth. *fotus, fotaåus* (like *tunthus*) OE. *foμt, foμtes* (like *toth*).

L. *genu, genus* (neuter, 4th L. decl. stem '-U') - Goth. *kniu, kniwis* (neuter, decl. vowel stem '-WA' = 2nd L. decl. in '-UM') - OE. *cneμo(w), cneμowes* (neuter, decl. vowel stem '-WA' = 2nd L. decl. in 'UM').

L. *gena, genae* (feminine, 1st decl., stem '-A') -Goth. *kinnus, kinnaåus* (feminine, decl. vowel stem '-U' = 4th L. decl. ln '-US'), OE. *cinn, cinne* (feminine, decl vowel stem '- O˜' = 1st L. decl. in '-A').

The opposite case is lllustrated by L. *manus, manus* and Goth. *handus, handaåus*, OE. *hand, handa*. Although the Latin root of *manus* is obviously not the same as the Gothic and Old Engllsh root, the noun both roots represent makes reference in all three languages to the same concept 'hand' and also in all three languages it is feminine and follows the same Indo-European inflectional pattern: the vowel stem declension in '-U'.

Neither should we be surprlsed, after the previous exploration, at the possibility of many types of both paradigmatic and extraparadigmatic influences which are often responsible for the establishment of new forms which can then replace one or more of the orlginal forms in a given paradigm. The Latln forms enclosed in square brackets in our illustration of the first two Latin declenslons with vowel stems (section 2.) are all innovations. Here is a possible explanation:

THE FIRST LATIN DECLENSION

The original G. s. was in *-s* (the Indo-European ending was *-es/os*). Hence the existence of relics of the type *pater familias* and *mater familias*. The ending *-ae*, a development of earlier *-ai* (*lupai > lupae, viai > viae*), is an analogical formation which replaces the form in *-as*.

The original Abl. s. was identical to the G. s. in all stems, the only exception being the 'O stems', that is, the second declension. Therefore here we have another innovation. See below, in archaic Latin, the influence from the second declension.

The G. pl. was not the original form. The ending *-aμrum* comes from the pronominal inflection IDE *$-a\mu so\mu m$).

The D. pl. and Abl. pl. are not the original forms either, since the majority of the Indo-European languages show either an ending with *-bh* or an ending with *-m-*. The -bh- ending is the one we see in L. *-bus* in the 3rd and 4th declensions and even in the old forms in *-aμbus* attested in the 1st declension, such as *deaμbus* and *filiaμbus* from *dea* and *filia* respectively, instead of

35

diÈμs, filiÈμs. These forms in *-is* are analogical and come from the 2nd declension.

THE SECOND LATIN DECLENSION.

The ending of G. s. in Indo-European was *-sio*. This is precisely the origin of the Germanic Genitive. Cf. Goth. *wulfis*, OE. *wulfes*, OSax. *wulfas*, etc. This is therefore the origin of the so-called 'genitivo sajoån' in Spanish grammars of English and which only recently is intruding into Spanish shop names in our modern cities, as the ubiquitous *Paco's* and company bear witness to. We leave for the moment the disputed question as to the possible adverblal origin of the old ending *-sio*.

The Indo-European Abl. s. was in *-eµd*/*-oµd*. The result of *-oµd* was *-oµ* in Latin and this explalns L. *lupoµ*. Archaic Latin shows relics of an ending with *-d-* in some adverbs and also in analogical formations of the 1st and 4th declensions. Cf. the case of Abl. s. *sententiaµd* = Classical Latin *sententiaµ*. The ending of N. pl. comes from the pronominal inflection and the G. pl. is analogical of the 1st declension. For the same reason as in the 1st declension, the D. pl. and Abl. pl. are not the original forms either. The endlng *-È µs* may come from the Indo-European locative and/or instrumental. Note that the D. pl. endings of the Germanlc declensions point to an Indo-European instrumental which, as in the case of the Indo-European D. pl. and Abl. pl., also possessed one variety with *-bh* and another with *-m-*. Hence the Germanic forms of the type OE. *cyningum*.

Linguistic evolution may have even more devastating effects, to the extent of completely obscuring the paradigms themselves. This is particularly the case of the two great stem vowel declensions in Old English, as we shall see in more detail in our next section.

4. THE CASE OF THE TWO FIRST STEM VOWEL DECLENSIONS.

As pointed out in section 2., the stem vowels of these two great declensions appear qualitatively reversed in the Germanic languages. Moreover, they are already very deteriorated in Old English, since the OE. declensions have lost a considerable amount of phonic substance in the process from the original Indo-European inflectional pattern to the historical data of Old English. In order to facilitate the visibility of this phenomenon it is necessary to reconstruct the missing steps and this we will do in the remainder of this paper. So, to justify the traditional nomenclature of the two great declensions as well as their cross-linguistic correspondence, the discusslon of each declenslon is preceded by a reconstruction synopsis with the elements which will serve as our points of reference. We shall exemplify the case of IDE. *GHEBHA 'gift'. We illustrate first the IDE. endings, then the hypothetical IDE. forms and finally the attested Gothic and Old English forms:

(INDO-EUROPEAN RECONSTRUCTION OF VOWEL STEMS IN -A˜ = GERMANIC -O˜)
(Singular)
N. IDE. -ø (ghebhaμ), Goth. giba, OE. giefu; Ac. IDE. -m (ghebhaμm), Goth. giba, OE. giefe; G. /Abl. IDE. -es/-os (ghebhâs), Goth. giboμs, OE. giefe; D. IDE. ei (ghebhaμi), Goth. gibai, OE. giefe.
(Plural)
N. IDE. -es (ghebhâs), Goth. giboμs, OE. giefa; Ac. IDE. -ns (ghebhaμns), Goth. giboμs, OE. giefa; G. IDE. - ôm (ghebhâm/ ôm), Goth. giboμ, OE. giefa; D. /Abl. IDE. (-bh-/-mr), Goth. giboμm, OE. giefum.

The important correspondence 'Indo-European A˜ = Germanlc O˜' is absolutely clear in cases like L. *maμter*, OE. *moμdor*, or like L. *fraμter*, OE. *broμthor*. Nevertheless, such an important correspondence may appear obscure or even invislble when the vowel ln question is part of an inflectional

ending and as such in final position. This is due to the fact that the strong word initial stress which characterizes the Germanic family of languages tends to weaken the quality of the vowels of the inflectional endings. In some cases such strong word initial stress is responsible for thelr complete disappearance.

Even so, the correspondence 'Indo-European A˜ = Germanic O˜' can be clearly seen in Gothlc. Cf. the Indo-European endings marked with a circum-flex accent in the reconstruction synopsis. With this accent we represent a stressing which, it is assumed, fell on some long vowels and diphthongs and prevented them from succumbing to the general process of Germanic word-end weakening. For this reason the 'A' which possessed such stressing (Â) survives as O˜ in final position in Germanic. So we have Goth. G. s. and N. pl. *giboµs* since it comes from IDE. *ghebhâs*. The Ac. pl. is also *giboµs* from IDE *ghebhas* for *ghebhaµns*. However, the N. s. and Ac. s. is *giba* since, coming from IDE. *ghebhaµ*, *ghebham,* without the aforementioned stressing, does not survive as 'O' in Germanic. It undergoes shortening, which in the East domain of Germanic (Gothic) follows the general tendency towards opening and hence the change from 'O' to 'A'.

As far as Old English is concerned, N. s. *giefu* is due to the opposite ten-dency in West and North Germanic, whereby the shortening materializes in subsequent closeness. Hence the fact that we have 'U' instead of 'A'. The contrast between *giefu* and *laµr*, both feminine nouns belonging to the same declension, is easily explained in Old English, where the ending *-u* is kept only in short stem elements, never in long stem elements. Remember that a stem is long when its vowel is long or when the vowel, although short, is fol-lowed by two consonants. OE. *giefu* is therefore an interesting testimony of the correspondence 'Indo-European A˜ = Germanic O˜' as well as of the correspondence 'lndo-European feminine declension in -A˜ = Germanic feminine declension in -O˜'. We are not so lucky with the rest of the declension. Ac. s. *giefe* is the regular and normal result of OE. *-om: -a > -ae > -e. G. s. *giefe* is an analogical formation; the regular development of IDE.

39

ghebhâs in Old English, after the common Germanic period, would have been *giefa* with *-a.* D. s. *giefe* is the result of regular development: -ai > -ae > -e. The development of N. pl. is parallel to that of G. s. So we have *giefa*. The Ac. pl. adopts the ending of the N. pl. (the regular development would have been *giefe*). The development of the G. pl. is perfectly regular and it is also *giefa*. Lastly, in the D. pl. we have the ending *-um* as in the whole of West and North Germanic.

We can now appreciate the tremendous importance of Gothic and the testimony of the Old English N. s. of the feminine 'O˘ declension', when the noun is short stemmed. We refer, of course, to the invaluable witness of the *-u* ending. In the synopsis that follows we shall exemplify IDE. *ULQUO 'wolf' and IDE. *IUGO 'yoke'. We illustrate first the IDE. endings, then the hypothetical IDE. forms and finally the attested Gothic and Old English forms:

(INDO-EUROPEAN RECONSTRUCTION OF VOWEL STEMS IN -O = GERMANIC -A)

(IDE. *ULQUO)
(Singular) N. IDE. -s (ulquos), Goth. wulfs, OE. wulf; AC. IDE. -m (ulquom), Goth. wulf, OE. wulf; G. IDE. -sio (ulquosio), Goth. wulfis, OE. wulfes; D. IDE. -ei (ulquoμi), Goth. wulfa, OE. wulfe; Abl. IDE. -oμd/-eμd (ulquoμd).
(Plural) N. IDE. -s (ulquôs), Goth. wulfoμs, OE. wulfas; Ac. IDE. -ns (ulquoμns), Goth. wulfans, OE. wulfas; G. IDE. -ôm (ulquôm), Goth. wulfeμ, OE. wulfa; D. /Abl. IDE. (-bh-/-m-), Goth. wulfam, OE. wulfum.

(IDE. *IUGO)
(Singular) N. IDE. -m (iugom), Goth. juk, OE. geoc; Ac. IDE. -m (iugom), Goth. juk, OE. geoc; G. IDE. -sio (iugosio), Goth. jukis, OE. geoces, D. IDE. -ei (iugoi), Goth. juka, OE. geoce, Abl. IDE. -oμd/-eμd (iugoμd).

(Plural) N. IDE. -a (iugaμ), Goth juka, OE. geocu; Ac. IDE. -a (iugaμ), Goth. juka, OE. geocu; G. IDE. -om (iugôm), Goth juke, OE. geoca; D. /Abl. IDE. (-bh-/-m-), Goth. jukam, OE. geocum.

The correspondence 'Indo-European O = Germanic A' is absolutely clear in a case like L. *octo* 'eight', Goth. *ahtau*. (The initial diphthong in OE. *eahta* 'eight' is due, as is well known to students of Old English, to a later development). However, the situation is very different in the realm of declension endings. Here the short vowels in final position tend to disappear by reason of the strong stressing of Germanic initial syllables in general, as we have already said. So, the *a* that we see, for example, in OE. N. pl. and Ac. pl. *wulfas*, G. pl. *wulfa*, is no witness of the correspondence 'Indo-European O = Germanic A'. Such an *a* cannot be the original -*a* of the stem. This, being short, would have disappeared at the end of a word, exactly the same as in Goth. N. s. *wulfs* or OE. N. s. *wulf*. Cf. the second *u* of L. *lupus*, ultimately from IDE. *LUQUO for *ULQUO. Therefore, what we have in OE. N. pl. and Ac. pl *wulfas*, G. pl. *wulfa*, is the result of the contraction of the stem vowel + the ending. Cf. our previous synopses.

I must conclude this section with an important observation. The N. pl. and Ac. pl. of the Indo-European neuter declension in 'O' coincides with the N. s. of the Indo-European feminine declension in 'A˘'. Also the N. pl. and Ac. pl. of the Germanic neuter declension in 'A' coincides with the N. s. of the Germanic feminine declension in 'O˘' if the noun in question is short-stemmed. The reason is simple. The N. Ac. pl. neuter has the IDE. ending -*aμ*, which was originally a collective form with singular meaning, exactly identical with the IDE. ending -*a* of the N. s. of the Indo-European feminine 'A˘ declension'. So, the explanation we have given concerning *giefu* <N. s. feminine) is equally valid for *geocu* (N. Ac. pl. neuter). This is the same case of L. *rosa* (N. s. feminine) and *templa* (N. Ac. pl. neuter). The testimony of the N. Ac. pl. of the OE. neuter 'A declension' in nouns with short stem is most revealing. These nouns, which maintain an -*u* ending in the plural, afford an exact

parallel of the Latin situation, for in Old English as in Latin such an ending coincides with that of the N. s. of the great feminine declension (the OE. feminine declension in 'O' and the L. feminine declension in 'A˜'). Cf. *thaμ geocu, thaμ scipu*, etc., as against *thaμ laμr, thaμ bearn*, etc., just the same as *seμo giefu* as against *seμo wylf.*

5. CONCLUSION

The reconstructed history of the Germanic declensions or, more precisely, their 'pre-history' is responsible for (1) the qualitative reversal which the traditional nomenclature points to ('IDE. feminine nouns in -A˜ = Germanic feminine nouns in -O˜' and 'IDE. masculine and neuter nouns in -O = Germanic mascullne and neuter nouns in -A') and (2) the *prima facie* disagreement between what the nomenclature expresses and the real morphology as it has come down to us in the texts. The historical-comparative method, in the context of which the study of Old English first grew, helps explain the terminological tradition. For us, Latin speakers, and ln so far as we should be prepared not to renounce our legacy, the Old English noun declensions should not be anything remote or enigmatic but an eloquent reminder of the common Indo-European origin which they share with the Latin declensions and the declension systems of the other old Indo-European languages. To put it briefly, it is our common Indo-European origin that they epltomize. May this thought be useful to us now when we are crossing the threshold of the new 'old Europe', both from the point of view of her re-found and refounded hlstory and from the point of view of her decisive project of mutual understanding and co-operation with other peoples.

Juan de la Cruz
University of Maålaga

REFERENCES

AGUD, A. & FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ, M. P., 1988: *Manual de Lengua Góticaa*, Salamanca.

BECK, G., 1969: "Über die gotischen Genitiv Plural Endungen", *Lingua*, 23, pp. 55-65.

DE LA CRUZ, J., 1986: *Iniciación Práctica al Inglés Antiguo*, Madrid.

DE LA CRUZ, J., 1983: *La Prosa de los Anglosajones*, Málaga and Salamanca.

DE LA CRUZ, J. & CAÑETE, A., 1992: *Historia del Inglés,* Málaga.

CAMPBELL, A., 1959: *Old English Grammar*, Oxford.

DAHL, I., l968: *Substantival Inflexion in Early Old English*, Lund.

DAHL, I., 1971: "Entwicklungstendenzen im germanischen Kasussystem", *Untersuchungen zur germanischen und deutschen Sprachgeschichte*, Oslo.

FERNÁNDEZ ÁLVAREZ, M. P., 1988: Manual de Antiguo Alto Alemán, Salamanca.

KRAHE, H., 1953: *Lingüística Indoeuropea*, Madrid.

KRAHE, H., 1963: *Indogermanische Sprachwissenschaft*, II, Berlin.

KRAHE, H., 1971: *Lingüística Germánica*, Madrid.

LOCKWOOD, W. B., 1969: *Indo-European Philology: Historical and Comparative*, London.

MUST, G., 1952: "The Gothic genitive plural in -*e*", *Language*, 28, pp. 218-221.

NIELSEN, H., 1981: *Old English and the Continental Germanic Languages: A Survey of Morphological and Phonological Interrelations*, Innsbruck.

O'NEILL, W., 1978: "The Evolution of the Germanlc Inflectional Systems: A Study of the Causes of Language Change", *Orbis*, 27, pp. 248-286.

PROKOSCH, E., 1938: *A Comparative Germanic Grammar*, Baltimore.

SPECHT, F., 1944: *Der Ursprung der indogermanischen Deklination,* Gottingen.

STREITBERG, W., 1974: *Urgermanische Grammatik*, Heidelberg.

VENDRYES, J., 1927: "Sur le genitif pluriel des sustantifs en germanique", *Indogermanische Forschungen*, 45, pp. 364-369.

VILLAR LIÉBANA, F., 1974: *Origen de la Flexión Nominal Indoeuropea*, Madrid.

WARDALE, E., 1922: *An Old English Grammar*, London.

WRIGHT, J., 1899: *A Primer of the Gothic Language*, Oxford.

* * *