CARL DARLING BUCK

Carl Darling Buck was born at Orland, Maine, on 2 October 1866; he died in Chicago on 8 February 1955, in his eighty-ninth year. Buck was one of the twenty-nine signers of the Call which led to the founding of the Linguistic Society of America in 1924; he was twice the Society's President, in 1927 and in 1937, and in 1941 became the first man to whom a number of this journal was dedicated (*Lg.* 17:3). Many other honors came to Buck: he received an honorary Ph.D. from the University of Athens in 1912; in 1915–16 he was President of the American Philological Society, in 1923–24 professor at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. He was a member of the American Philosophical Society, and since 1921 a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. The professional and learned societies to which he belonged are too many to list here.

Buck, the only child of Edward and Emeline Darling Buck, came from two distinguished New England families. On his father's side his first American ancestor was William Buck, who came from London and settled at Woburn, Massachusetts, in 1635. On his mother's side he was descended from the Darlings, who had settled in Salem around 1640.

It was Jonathan Buck, the great-great-grandson of William Buck, who in 1762 moved to what was later Maine and founded Buckstown (now Bucksport) at the mouth of the Penobscot. Jonathan Buck served as a colonel in the Revolution and took an active part in several of the campaigns, including the disastrous Penobscot expedition of 1779. In the same year, the Buck home was burned by the British. Many legends grew up about the name of Colonel Jonathan Buck: one was that he burned a witch, who cursed him saying that her foot would appear on his tomb; another version is that it was his wife who cursed him. In any case, the stone of the tomb shows the undeniable outline of a leg which cannot be erased. Buck's maternal grandfather was the eminent (and very strict and stern) Congregationalist Deacon Darling. Carl was married to Clarinda Darling Swazy on 10 September 1889. To them were born three children: two sons, Carl Edward and Howard Swazy, and one daughter, Clarinda Darling. His wife and sons predeceased him; his sole survivor is his daughter, with whom he lived for several years in his old home at 5609 Kenwood Avenue, Chicago.

Carl's father, Edward Buck, attended Yale College, intending to enter the ministry, but changed his mind and instead went into the lumbering, shipbuilding, and sailing business in and around Bucksport and Orland. It was here that Carl Buck spent his childhood and early youth. Maine, especially the region of Bucksport, was always 'home' to him. Until three years before his death he always spent his summers there, at his cottage on Lake Allamoosook some five miles from Bucksport. He loved to swim, to fish, to go canoeing, and to chop wood. To the end of his days, in spite of his long sojourn in the Middle West, he remained a 'Maine man'. When he walked down to his classes at the

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University of Chicago on a bad, snowy day, with his fur cap, his long, black, fur-lined greatcoat, and his high galoshes, he looked like any sturdy Maine citizen on his way to the general store or going about his daily routine. He was a man of considerable but quiet humor; his more intimate colleagues, particularly those who visited him at his summer home, were well aware of this facet of his character. He loved a practical joke, even if it was on himself. This humor was still active during his last patient months of suffering in the summer and fall of 1954.

Buck was physically vigorous to within a few years of his death. He continued to play tennis long past his seventieth year. His brisk step through the halls and library stacks in the Classics Building was familiar to all. His favorite position for reading a book which he had taken down from a shelf was to place the book open flat on a table with an elbow on either side of it, and to lean toward the table with the knee of his right leg resting on the back of the ankle of the left foot. I have tried that position but found my limbs trembling in five minutes. He would remain thus poised and absorbed for as long as fifteen minutes, with a cloud of Prince Albert smoke rolling about his head.

While Buck had been troubled by emphysema for many years, it had not incapacitated him until some five years before his death. Though he could no longer walk, he continued to go to his office in the Classics Building, as always before, until the last few months. All this time he was steadily preparing the new edition of his *Introduction to the study of the Greek dialects*, which appeared just a few weeks after he died. As soon as the manuscript of this work was sent to the printer, he started preparing a supplement to his *Dictionary of selected Indo-European synonyms*. The outline of this supplement and indeed the initial stage of the discussion of several of the items were fairly well advanced when he requested me to take it over last July. Even during the past summer, while confined to his study and bedroom on the second floor of his house, Buck was still pursuing with vigor and complete clarity of judgment the latest developments in Indo-European linguistics. In particular, the recent tentative decipherment of the Mycenean inscriptions in linear B attracted his attention. He was even able to insert a footnote concerning the dialectal problem involved in the final proofs of his *Greek dialects*.

The young Buck received his primary schooling at Eastern Maine Conference Seminary at Bucksport, a well-known Methodist Episcopal preparatory school of the time. After his graduation there in 1882, instead of attending Andover for one year as he had first intended, he went down to New Haven with his father for a class reunion. While there he passed the entrance examinations for Yale College and entered the next fall. He was not quite sixteen years old.

During his freshman year at Yale, he continued his classical studies: Greek with Frank B. Tarbell, Thomas D. Seymour, and Oscar H. Cooper, Latin with Ambrose Tighe and J. D. Amundson. Both Greek and Latin continued to occupy a large portion of his curriculum throughout his four undergraduate years, chiefly under the instruction of Seymour, Tarbell, and Tighe. In his senior year he began the study of Sanskrit under William Dwight Whitney. In 1886 he entered the graduate school, working largely in Greek and Sanskrit, but also

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taking some work in Old French and Old English. His undergraduate record at Yale shows that he studied some German also in his junior year, but for a part of his junior year and for his senior year this record is incomplete as regards his 'optional studies'; whether he took more German and studied French at all in college is not to be determined. His French, certainly a prerequisite for his graduate work in Old French, may have been taken in the preparatory school at Bucksport.

In 1887–88 Buck spent his first year of study abroad in Italy and in Greece at the American School of Classical Studies. A part of the time he spent on a walking trip through the Peloponnesus. (His notebook says 'with Thatcher', probably Oliver J. Thatcher, later professor of history at Chicago, who was at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens at the same time.) For some time, too, he was in Germany, but apparently not for study. The next year he was again at Yale, where he received the Ph.D. in 1889, under the direction of Professor Seymour. His thesis subject was *The choregia in Athens and at Ikaria*, apparently the same as an article by the same title published in *The American journal of archeology* 5.18–33, dated at Athens, 12 December 1888. For this same period Buck's notebook indicates that he took part in some excavations in Egypt.

In the fall of 1889, immediately after his marriage, Buck went to Germany to the University of Leipzig. His intention was to study with the Indo-Iranian scholar Karl Geldner, and he followed him for a year to the University of Berlin; but he returned the next year to Leipzig, where he worked especially under Karl Brugmann and August Leskien. It was at Leipzig that Buck wrote his first significant contribution to the study of the Italic dialects, the field which was to share, with the Greek dialects, his major efforts during all his mature years.

In October of 1890 the University of Leipzig announced the following 'Preisaufgabe':

> Es wird eine Darstellung des Vocalismus des Oskischen gewünscht. Diese soll nicht lediglich eine statistische sein, sondern es ist auch der Lautwert der Schriftzeichen möglichst genau zu bestimmen und das geschichtliche Verhältnis des oskischen Vocalismus zu dem der nächstverwandten Sprachen zu untersuchen. Statt einer Bearbeitung der gesamten Vocalverhältnisse der Sprache ist auch eine Behandlung nur einzelner Vocale zulässig.

Buck submitted his work in September 1891. It was judged by the Faculty in the following terms:

> Diese letztere Abhandlung erscheint im Ganzen als die tüchtigere von den beiden eingegangen Bearbeitungung. Es konnte ihr aber aus formalen Gründen der Preis nicht erteilt werden, und so beschloss die Facultät ihr eine ehrenvolle Erwähnung zuteil werden zu lassen.

The work was published in the following year (1892) under the title *Der Vocalismus der oskischen Sprache*. The author does not mention in his preface, from which the quotations above are taken, what the 'formal reasons' were. I understand that his status as a foreign student prevented the awarding of a prize.

The preface to this monograph is not without interest and value to the Indo

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Europeanist today. It brings into bright focus the seriousness with which Indo-European studies were being pursued in Germany at that time, just when so many old cruces were giving way before the renewed onslaught by the Jung-grammatiker, now in their maturity, under whom Buck was studying. For example, there is young Buck's vigorous defense of his methodology, which calls for RECONSTRUCTION not mere COMPARISON as the final goal of comparative grammar, as had just previously been proposed by Blass in his new edition of Kuhner's *Ausführliche Grammatik der griechischen Sprache*. One cannot but tremble for and at the same time admire this young American who states his position so clearly in matters which were the subject of heated controversy at that time, especially between Berlin and Leipzig.

The monograph is dedicated to the leaders of the Leipzig school, Brugmann and Leskien. At the end of his preface (xi) Buck takes occasion to thank his other teachers in Germany: in Leipzig, the Sanskritist and Celtist Ernst Windisch, Bruno Lindner in Indo-Iranian, and Robert Scholvin in Slavic Philology; in Berlin, Johannes Schmidt, Karl Geldner, and F. C. Andreas; and in Münster, Christian Bartholomae. One cannot imagine a more invigorating environment than would be produced by the lectures of such men as these. And at the same time one cannot help wondering at whose advice and for what reason Buck left Berlin to return to Leipzig during this period of intense rivalry between these two centers, the one led by Johannes Schmidt, the other now by Brugmann. Could it be that Geldner himself was of some influence? He had just been called from Leipzig to Berlin, and as a philologist, rather than a linguist, he saw the merits of both schools in better perspective.

Immediately upon his return from Germany in 1892, Buck was selected by William Rainey Harper to join the original faculty of the University of Chicago, as Assistant Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology, when the University opened its doors on the first of October 1892. This appointment and four others made at the same time were given to the younger men whom Harper had known previously at Yale, when he was Professor of Hebrew there. The others were George S. Goodspeed, Assistant Professor of Religion and Ancient History; Robert F. Harper, Associate Professor of Semitic Languages and Literature; Frank Justin Miller, Instructor in Latin; and A. Alonzo Stagg, Director of Physical Culture. Buck had been recommended to President Harper already in the autumn of 1890 by Seymour, Whitney, and others. He was raised to the rank of associate professor in 1894, and to professor in 1900. In 1930 he was named Martin D. Ryerson Distinguished Service Professor of Sanskrit and Comparative Philology, and in 1933 became Professor Emeritus.

We may confidently say that it was Carl Darling Buck who established the study of Indo-European linguistics in the United States. We do not detract thereby from the importance of other early scholars in the field, such as Buck's own teacher William Dwight Whitney, Maurice Bloomfield and Hermann Collitz at The Johns Hopkins University, or Benjamin Ide Wheeler at the University of California. Though Buck's students were always few, it was in his classes that most of the next two generations of comparatists received at least a part of their training, or else it was Buck's students who trained them. In the

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University's first ten years, five doctoral dissertations in Indo-European linguistics were written at Chicago, among them that of Buck's most distinguished pupil in the Indo-European field, Edgar Howard Sturtevant.

It was perhaps Sturtevant, only a few years his teacher's junior, who among these early pupils could give the best account of the young teacher. So far as I can tell, that account coincides well with my own of thirty years later. Buck was never a popular teacher, never what would be now considered a 'good' teacher by the criteria of the Colleges of Education. He probably never had enough undergraduate students at any one time to have made a student evaluation possible. If he had been graded by such students, I shudder to think of his score. Buck was a scholar's teacher: if you were not interested in his subject, you had better study something else; if you were not prepared, you had better go back and get your preparation. I remember well my first course in Sanskrit with him. It was announced as 'elementary'. There were three students registered; two of us had had more than a year of Sanskrit already, the third none whatever. Buck discovered the first day what the two of us could stand, and on the second day set his pace accordingly. The third student heroically attemped for two more days to find out what we were doing.

Sturtevant has told me how, in the early days in old Cobb Hall, Buck would be meeting a class of three or four students in a large classroom when the room would be invaded by a group of students looking for a place to study or merely to talk, and on more than one occasion they could not be persuaded that a class was going on nor that a person as youthful as Buck could be the professor.

Buck could never be drawn from the subject by a leading question nor would he attempt a half-thought-out answer to a legitimate question if the details of the answer were not completely clear at the moment. He would merely listen carefully, then go on from the point he had reached in the discussion himself, leaving the questioner embarrassed at having interrupted him. The next day, however, the answer to that question would be the first order of business. We soon got used to that, and came to appreciate Buck's methods. Buck was pointed in criticism, chary of words of praise. On the day after an examination, he frequently went through the results in alphabetical order. If he merely picked the paper up and laid it back down, you breathed a sigh of relief; if he said 'good' or 'satisfactory', you were highly elated. The longest comment on an examination paper I ever heard him make was, 'Mr. So-and-So, your paper makes no sense whatever'.

On the eve of my own final oral examination I was being coached by one who had already been through the ordeal: 'Don't think,' he said, 'that you can get Professor Buck off the track tomorrow. He may let you talk, but he'll come right back and ask you the same thing over when you've quit talking.' It was sound advice, but I hardly needed the warning. After that final oral, after I had been pacing the hall nervously while deliberations were going on inside the examination room, the door finally opened and Buck approached with outstretched hand, followed by Leonard Bloomfield. The only thing he said was, 'Not on your Oscan and Umbrian though.' I knew then that everything but Oscan and Umbrian had been 'satisfactory'—in Buck's definition of satis-

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factory. I found out only much later that Buck actually felt a great sympathy for the candidate during an oral examination and was frequently quite disturbed if he felt that another examiner was not treating him fairly or was trying to confuse him. The next morning when Buck entered the seminar room, he took his pipe from his mouth and said, 'You've got your degree now; better make yourself known.' Then after a moment of thought, 'You seemed to handle the Avestan pretty well. There's a problem there which has always bothered me some. Why don't you look into it?' And then he outlined the problem to me with great care. I never told him that my assumed excellence in Avestan was due to the fact that the evening before, by way of last minute review of the alphabet, I had by chance chosen the very hymn in Jackson's reader which he assigned for translation and commentary at the examination. I could have shut my eyes and done almost as well. Needless to say, I never solved the problem.

His distaste for the unnecessary use of words, carried frequently to the extreme, was characteristic not merely in dealing with students: it was well known, almost proverbial, among his colleagues and in his family. One might think that he had read early and taken to heart Menander's admonition: 'Ẽ lége ti sigês kreîtton ẽ sigẽn ékhe.' Whether it was conscious on Buck's part I do not know, but at least he was aware of it, as the following anecdote will show. When Mrs. Buck received a severe wound in the tongue from a dentist's drill, apparently because she spoke while it was in her mouth, Buck's comment is reported to have been: 'That could never have happened to me!'

Possibly because of the same tendency that made him use the spoken word sparingly, Buck's use of the written language was a model of conciseness and clarity, the right word in the right place. To my mind, no one in the entire field of linguistic science could handle the English language more effectively and pleasingly; few men whose works I have read could equal him in any language; I think of only two—Wilhelm Braune in German and Antoine Meillet in French. As many times as I have read his two greatest masterpieces, his *Grammar of Oscan and Umbrian* and his *Introduction to the study of the Greek Dialects*, it is always a pleasure to read them again, especially when I reflect on other treatments of the same subjects in English or in other languages.

These two works, immediately upon their publication, became the standard textbooks in their fields. They have been used continuously over the years, not only in this country and England but also in France and Germany. In fact, the Oscan and Umbrian grammar was translated into German by Eduard Prokosch and published in the famous series of *Lehr- und Handbücher* in the *Indogermanische Bibliothek* of Carl Winter in Heidelberg—an honor rarely accorded a work by any foreign scholar.

In addition to these two masterpieces, I must mention here Buck's *Comparative grammar of Greek and Latin* (Chicago, 1933 and several printings since); the *Reverse index of Greek nouns and adjectives*, written with Walter Petersen (Chicago, 1945); and the *Dictionary of selected synonyms in the principal Indo-European languages* (Chicago, 1949). The two latter projects had occupied Buck's attention for many years, and both used the contributions provided by

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several doctoral theses written under his direction. The last work, especially, is a pioneering project of prime significance; it opens up and outlines a field of linguistic research with broad implications, especially for those interested in the history of ideas. They, perhaps more than the Indo-European linguist, should profit from Buck's careful and judicious compilations and careful siftings of etymology, since they are, for the most part, ill equipped to judge technical linguistic matters. Here is a book on which they can rely.

To read through Buck's contributions to the journals is to follow the history of Indo-European linguistics, more particularly of Greek and Latin linguistics, for two generations. Especially is this true of the first few decades after his return from Leipzig and his arrival in Chicago. In these years our knowledge of the details of Indo-European comparative grammar was consolidated. The victory of the Junggrammatiker in methodology had been conceded; the fruitfulness of their methodology was being demonstrated; and Carl Darling Buck contributed his full measure to that demonstration. He was never one to sponsor a theory when he did not have the linguistic data to back it up. Always keen in discerning the flaws in the work of other scholars, he was at the same time always ready to accept a new hypothesis or a new explanation as soon as it was proved to his own satisfaction; and he was frequently a contributor to the proof of theories advanced by others when they themselves had failed to present all the available evidence.

A man more modest of his own accomplishments has rarely lived. A short time before his death he was asked by a visiting scholar, who had come to honor him, how it felt to be the greatest living authority in a field (the reference was to the Greek dialects), and what one might prescribe, as it were, as the pattern to be followed to reach this eminence. Buck's lips parted in a slight smile: 'Just outlive all the rest,' he said.

Buck's death at the age of 88 years almost brings to an end the work of the first generation of students of the Junggrammatiker. Most of them died before him, some of them several years younger than he: Antoine Meillet, Holger Pedersen, Emil Sieg, Hermann Hirt, and Roland Kent, to mention only a few. Only a handful remain: Paul Kretschmer, Ferdinand Sommer, George M. Bolling. Indeed Buck's two most distinguished students have already been memorialized in the pages of this journal: Leonard Bloomfield and Edgar Howard Sturtevant.

It is perhaps not inappropriate that we in America, who have tried to follow in the footsteps of Buck and his teachers, should take this occasion to reflect a moment on the present state and the future development of Indo-European studies. It is a fact that there are not many rising scholars nor many young men in our graduate schools who are devoting their energies to the pursuit of Indo-European comparative grammar. A glance at the catalog offerings of the major universities during the period, say 1910–1920 as compared with 1950, not to mention the curriculum of the Linguistic Institute shortly after its founding as compared to that of more recent years, will, I believe, bear out this conclusion. Instead of courses in the older Indo-European languages, we find in recent years a remarkable increase in offerings in descriptive linguistics. Does this mean that

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the older period of scientific study of language is past and that its methods are no longer valid?

I doubt that anyone would seriously wish to challenge the methods of the 19th-century comparatists, those methods in which Buck and his students were trained, or their results. The conclusions which they reached have been accepted and found valid and useful by those who work in other fields of the history of culture—the historian, the archeologist, the philologist, and the anthropologist.

Or could it be that there is nothing more to be done in this field, that this chapter is closed, at least so far as Indo-European linguistics is concerned? Is the situation here as it is in the physical sciences, where one might be inclined to concede that the physics of the 18th and early 19th centuries did its task well, that its findings are valid, but that it is now superseded by another physics where the atom is no longer unanalyzable, where a new theory of matter has replaced an old one?

To answer this question let us see if anything has happened since Brugmann finished the final volume of his comparative Indo-European grammar in 1916. We know that the investigation of two new branches of Indo-European has been going on in the present century—of Tocharian and of Hittite. That the former was Indo-European was of course known to Brugmann, but its comparative grammar had not as yet yielded results significant enough for inclusion in his compendium. That Hittite was related to Indo-European could hardly yet have been clear to him in 1916. But since that time it is exactly in this area that the more significant discoveries have been made and hypotheses developed bearing on Indo-European comparative grammar, beginning with Kurylowicz' identification of Hittite *h* with de Saussure's 'coefficients sonantiques'. This discovery and the further development of the laryngeal hypothesis, notably by Sturtevant, make imperative the rewriting of Proto-Indo-European (or Indo-Hittite) grammar. I can hardly agree with Buck's own judgment, expressed in the preface to the 1948 reprint of his *Comparative grammar of Greek and Latin:* 'But I have not introduced any such radical revisions of reconstructed IE forms as some scholars would make, on the basis of Hittite comparisons and theories of IE laryngeal consonants. Furthermore, so far as I can see, such a revision will affect mainly the reconstruction of Proto-IE (or "Indo-Hittite" ...).' Most persons who offer courses in this subject, have, I imagine, like myself, felt compelled to revise greatly at least the treatment of Indo-European vowel gradation in the light of this hypothesis. Certainly future handbooks will have to take cognizance of it.

But that is not all, and here is where the linguistics of the 20th century has a bearing on that of Brugmann, Leskien, Hirt, Meillet, Buck, and others. There is hardly a handbook, in fact hardly a statement concerning phonological development in any one of the handbooks, that could not gain in clarity and significance if it were rewritten in the light of structural theory. The facts are there; indeed, in many instances the concepts of phonemic theory are implied, particularly in the works of Meillet and of Brugmann. What is lacking is that clarity of theoretical statement which the student of comparative linguistics expects and needs, in order (if for nothing else) to enable him to see the fundamental unity

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of linguistic science. And it must be the present students of Indo-European linguistics who are to undertake these tasks. But where are they? At most we can find only a diminishing handful. It is in descriptive rather than in comparative linguistics that America has taken the lead in the past two or three decades. If the desired union of the two disciplines is to be promoted, a new generation of comparatists must be trained—comparatists who must at the same time be adequately acquainted with descriptive techniques.

The obstacle that stands in our way here is obvious: the lack of training in the fundamental languages at an early stage. Rare indeed is the student who comes to college with preparation in French, German, or Latin (not to mention Greek!) adequate for advanced work in any one of these, let alone several, at the undergraduate level. Yet for the Indo-Europeanist these basic languages are just as important as they were when Buck was a student at Yale. For those of us who would promote the future of Indo-European studies, it is far more important at the moment that we should join forces with the teachers of languages in their present valiant attempt to revive the study of languages in high school, than that we should continue to try to teach linguistic science, comparative or descriptive, to monolingual students, no matter what their ability or interest may be. This is a situation which Buck did not have to face, but which we today must face and face squarely.

The study of comparative linguistics is as promising today as it was when Buck went to Leipzig. In fact, it is more promising; for we have the work of his generation of scholars to build on and we have the techniques of the structuralists to bring to bear on problems which they left unsolved or confused. What we lack is their knowledge of languages, and that we can never replace by techniques. The mid-20th-century physicist must also know his calculus.

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