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**Review: Studies in Phonological Theory and Historical Linguistics**

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This volume represents a definitive collection of Bill Darden’s research over his career of more than forty years as a linguist. The book is divided along his main areas of expertise into two parts: (1) “Historical Linguistics,” consisting of 17 chapters that cover a variety of problematic issues in Indo-European, Balto-Slavic, and Slavic historical phonology, morphology, and syntax; and (2) “Phonological Theory,” comprising 10 articles, which illustrate Darden’s approach to tackling difficult issues in phonological theory through examples from Russian and Greenlandic.

Darden begins with an introduction expounding his linguistic philosophy, developed over his prodigious career. His grasp of the historical developments from Indo-European to Slavic is remarkable. However, the manner in which he presents many of the complex concepts involved, e.g. rule reversal and its relation to the ruki development in Slavic (3), can be rather laconic (even for seasoned linguists). Nonetheless, there is one consistent strain that runs throughout the volume, summarized by the author as follows:

Pure phonological rules do not have exceptions in a given style of speech. This makes pure phonological rules almost immune to analogy. To change them, you must learn to pronounce a configuration that did not previously occur in the language. (4–5)

Differentiating phonology from morphonology is clearly one of Darden’s missions as a scholar. Moreover, in charming fashion, Darden says himself, “I have gotten a bit mellow in my old age” (5), and this imparts not only a sense of humility but also a refreshing candor that makes the introduction a perfect segue into the individual studies themselves. While all the studies in part 1 and part 2 should be deemed important, I can highlight three specific ones that are exemplary representatives of Darden’s profound expertise, while also being indicative of his characteristic brevity, which can be challenging for the reader at times.

In “The Evolution of the Balto-Slavic Verb” (part 1, 45–70), Darden explains how the discovery of Hittite complicated previous theories of the Indo-European (IE) verbal system. Where the purported Balto-Slavic verbal system originally was thought to resemble Greek and Sanskrit,
Darden throws this into question by utilizing his impressive knowledge of comparative IE and the “new” Hittite data. The sheer volume of comparative IE and Balto-Slavic data that Darden presents alone makes this article a must read for any specialist in Indo-European linguistics. However, the author’s rather elliptical style leaves the reader essentially punch-drunk at the end. For example, Darden concludes that Lithuanian most likely preserves the proto-Indo-European verbal system, but states that it has “changed the inflectional expression” (70). It is difficult to comprehend what such a statement means after having sorted through so much (mostly) Lithuanian data.

Possibly the most significant of all the articles in the volume is Darden’s “Comments on Ivanov’s Istoričeskaja grammatika russkogo jazyka” (part 1, 141–188). In this study, Darden meticulously dissects Ivanov’s many imprecise conclusions on Russian historical phonology. For example, where Ivanov believes the opposition of /a/ and /æ/ to be based on a preceding soft consonant, i.e., an allophonic distribution, Darden digs deeper, cleverly utilizing his expertise in Old Russian orthography and paleography to convincingly assert that they were in fact separate phonemes. For the sake of brevity, I cannot possibly adumbrate here all the instances where Darden’s brilliance shines in this chapter. It is important to note, though, that Darden draws many of his assumptions from Borkovskii and Kuznetsov (1965). However, by doing so, he restores the work’s relevance (an honorable deed) and even improves on it by updating it with modern phonological theory.

The third article worth drawing attention to, “The Russian Palatalizations and the Nature of Morphophonological Rules” (part 2, 325–338), first of all, is a great introduction to possibly the most important phonological development in the history of Russian (essential knowledge for all scholars of Slavic languages!). Darden begins by making the important distinction between pure phonological alternations, e.g., Russian final obstruent devoicing, and morphonological alternations, which on the surface resemble phonology but are in fact relics of ancient phonological alternations and are therefore labeled “productive” instead. He uses this same logic in his discussion of Russian vowel/zero alternations by laying out six steps in predicting which stems will have the alternation. Moreover, and importantly for the student, he lists the exceptions to the rules. In closing the article, he emphasizes that these
morphophonological alternations have no semiotic value themselves, although the resulting forms obviously do have meaning. He compares these Slavic alternations with the German umlaut which has the semiotic value of singularity/plurality. Therefore, meaningful alternation (e.g., German umlaut) is not productive, whereas functional alternation (e.g., Russian vowel/zero) is.

One (not entirely) minor critique of the entire volume is that Darden writes as if there is consensus that Baltic and Slavic were at one time in prehistory one branch of Indo-European. Despite the undeniable similarities in structure and lexicon in Baltic and Slavic languages, there is no definitive proof against Baltic and Slavic simply becoming more alike due to geographical proximity and subsequent linguistic convergence. Opinions vary greatly, often involving extralinguistic factors (to put it mildly), and a verdict is far from decided on this topic.

On the whole, this collection of studies is at minimum a useful handbook for students of Indo-European linguistics who have an interest in (Balto-)Slavic and an absolutely necessary addition to the library of any professional Indo-European or Slavic linguist. Moreover, even non-linguists stand to benefit greatly from Darden’s contribution to the field. For the first time, we now have his major works readily accessible in one volume. Darden’s distinctive brief style can prove frustrating at times, but if the reader can wade through the tremendous amount of data provided in these studies, there is a treasure trove of linguistic gems to be found.

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