ERIC SHANE BRYAN:
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This book applies to Old Norse-Icelandic literature some of the principles of pragmatics, the branch of linguistics concerned with language in relation to the contexts of its use.

The first chapter uses for illustrative purposes a brief exchange between Kolskeggr Hámundarson and Kolr Egilsson in Chapter 63 of *Njáls saga*. Kolskeggr, who has just struck off Kolr's leg with a short-sword, asks him: *'Hvárt nam þik eða eigi?'* 'Did that hit you or not?', and Kolr replies: *'Þess galt ek nú* […] *er ek var berskjaldaðr'* 'I'm justly served for not using my shield'. It is clear that Kolskeggr, well aware of the damage his blade has done, is not asking for information here. In pragmatic terms, the actual words of his question constitute a *locution*, while their intended meaning (something like 'a very palpable hit!') constitutes an *illocution*, and the result of the illocution, Kolr's loss of face as reflected in his reply, is a case of *perlocution*. ('Face', one's sense of oneself as seen by others, is here described, p. 29, as one of the two components of self-worth, the other being 'identity', one's own sense of oneself.) When locution and illocution do not coincide in meaning, as they would in the present case if Kolskeggr were simply asking for information, the unspoken words of the illocution ('a palpable hit' or whatever) are referred to as the *implicature*. Cases of implicature are thus most often found in passages of indirectness in speech (not to be confused with indirect speech in the sense of *oratio obliqua*).

Indirect aggression in speech is the subject of the second chapter, as exemplified in the two arguments in *Vǫlsunga saga* (Chapter 30 in R.G. Finch's 1965 edition) between Brynhildr Buðladóttir and Guðrún Gjúkadóttir about the qualities of their husbands. It is shown that Guðrún wins the first argument and Brynhildr the second, and the general claim is made on this basis that indirectness of expression reflects the stronger position in an argument and directness the weaker position, though the analogous passages in the Old Norse *Þiðreks saga* and the Middle High German *Nibelungenlied* indicate that 'embellished directness', in the nature of bluffing, may on occasion be offered in resistance to indirect aggression.

The third chapter borrows from T.A. Shippey ('Principles of conversation in Beowulfian speech', in *Techniques of description* […], ed. John M. Sinclair *et al*. (1993), pp. 109-126, pp. 118, ff.) the concept of 'the conflictive principle': the verbal challenging of one another by two people intent on testing each other's worth, which, if established to the satisfaction of each challenger, makes for cordial relations between them. This is illustrated by the initial exchange between Halli and King Haraldr Sigurðarson in the fifteenth-century ('younger') Flateyjarbók text of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr*, in which the king asks Halli two insultingly obscene questions to which Halli replies in kind. Other examples given include the initial conversation between Kjartan Óláfsson and King Óláfr Tryggvason in Chapter 40 of *Laxdœla saga*, just after their swimming match.

In Chapter 4 the term 'felicity conditions' is used for those conditions which, according to J.L. Austin (*How to do things with words* (1965), pp. 14-15; first published 1962; cf. 2nd edn (1975), pp. 14-15), must be met if a performative utterance – one which, in the act of utterance, performs the act to which it refers, such as 'I do' in a marriage ceremony – is to be felicitous, i.e. is to have validity as such an utterance. Thus the proclamation given in the passive voice and in *oratio obliqua* in Ari Þorgilsson's *Íslendingabók*, but presumably spoken by Þorgeirr Þorkelsson the Lawspeaker: *Þá vas þat mælt í lǫgum, at allir menn skyldi kristnir vesa* […] 'Then it was proclaimed as law that all people should be Christian', has validity, for all that its precise words are unknown, as a performative utterance, not only because it brings about the conversion of Iceland but also because the felicity conditions for its doing so have been established with the acceptance by everyone of Þorgeirr's earlier recommendation in *oratio recta 'at vér látim ok eigi þá ráða, es mest vilja í gegn gangask, ok miðlum svá mál á miðli þeira, at hvárirtveggju hafi nakkvat síns máls, ok hǫfum allir ein lǫg ok einn sið'* 'that we do not let those who most wish to oppose each other prevail, and let us arbitrate between them, so that each side has its own way in some measure; and let us all have one law and one religion'. What the chapter calls 'conversional felicity conditions' (p. 115) are further found to have been met in the story of Þorvaldr's conversion of Bárðr in *Þorvalds þáttr tasalda*, but not in that of Hákon góði's failed conversion of Norway, told in Snorri Sturluson's *Hákonar saga góða* and elsewhere, and only partly in that of Þangbrandr's attempted conversion of Iceland as told in *Kristni saga* and *Óláfs saga Tryggvasonar en mesta*.

With the book's terms of reference thus established in its first four chapters, the remaining four make use of them with further examples. Chapter 5, on the language of Icelanders abroad, not least in exchanges with foreign rulers, notes a breakdown of the conflictive principle in Gunnlaugr's first encounter with Earl Eiríkr of Hlaðir in *Gunnlaugs saga*. Chapter 6, on proverbs and poetry, shows that illocution and perlocution are well exemplified in *Laxdœla saga*'s account of Guðrún Ósvífrsdóttir's obscure but proverb-like statement to her husband Bolli after he has killed her once-beloved Kjartan, and Bolli's reaction to it; and that in *Grettis saga* Grettir uses verse as a vehicle for implicature in enhancing his own 'face'. Chapter 7, on the pragmatics of gender, analyses the conversation in *Gísla saga* between Gísli's wife Auðr and Ásgerðr, married to Gísli's brother, about their husbands and Auðr's brother Vésteinn, noting its links with the arguments between Brynhildr and Guðrún in *Vǫlsunga saga*, and further remarking, with examples from *Víglundar saga* and *Njáls saga*, on the felicity conditions involving social status that ensure the victory of one woman over another in an argument.

In the eighth and final chapter, on 'Manuscript genealogy and the diachrony of pragmatic usage […]', the two episodes involving Halli's dialogue with King Haraldr in *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* and the Auðr/Asgerðr conversation in *Gísla saga*, discussed in Chapters 3 and 7 (see above), are each shown to have been preserved, with the works in which they appear, in two versions. While it is acknowledged that the later of two manuscript variants of a saga or *þáttr* will not necessarily reflect a later version of the work in question than the one reflected in the earlier variant (see p. 200, notes 10 and 11), it is nonetheless maintained in this chapter that the Morkinskinna (c. 1275) and the 'younger' Flateyjarbók (fifteenth century) variants of *Sneglu-Halla þáttr* reflect versions of the *þáttr* dating respectively from the first half of the thirteenth century and the end of the medieval period. It is further accepted that, as recently argued (see p. 208), the 'shorter' and 'longer' versions of *Gísla saga* date respectively from those two periods. A comparison of the two versions of each episode shows that considerable additions of a clarifying nature are made in the version regarded as later, perhaps suggesting that a general decline in the indirectness of 'pragmatic usage' took place towards the end of the medieval period.

The author's analyses in this book, by no means all of which have been noted here, are for the most part convincing, even if he seems on occasion to read too much into his chosen texts. Not everyone will

agree that King Óláfr Tryggvason's description of Kjartan as *gørviligr* 'accomplished' in Chapter 40 of *Laxdœla saga* can also be taken in context to mean 'dressed' (given that *gørvi* means 'clothing') and is an ironic punning reference to Kjartan's state of (un)dress just after swimming (p. 82); or that Gunnlaugr's words to King Æþelræd, *gǫngum upp á saklausa menn* 'we trample over innocent men' in Chapter 7 of *Gunnlaugs saga* is a veiled allusion to the St Brice's Day massacre of 1002, nowhere referred to explicitly in the saga (pp. 130-34); or that the phrase *til kenningar* 'by way of recognition', used by Hallmundr in Chapter 57 of *Grettis saga* when reintroducing himself to Grettir (who had previously known him as Loptr), is a reference to the fact that, when they last met in Chapter 54, Loptr had spoken to him in a verse full of poetic kennings (pp. 160-64). There are some questionable translations, notably *gǫngum upp á* as 'gang up on' in the passage just quoted from *Gunnlaugs saga*, and (a point of which the editors of the series might take note) just a few too many cases of stylistic hastiness, with small but important words (such as prepositions and articles) being omitted, and singular verbs appearing with plural subjects, and vice versa.

This does not make the book any the less welcome. It is a veritable toolkit of terms useful for identifying and describing many of the subtleties of Old Norse-Icelandic literature, by no means all of which are recognisable on first reading.

RORY McTURK UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS