

**FIVE PIECES OF RUNIC  
POETRY  
TRANSLATED FROM  
THE ISLANDIC LANGUAGE**

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Five Pieces of Runic Poetry Translated from the Islandic Language by Thomas Percy

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F I V E P I E C E S

O F

R U N I C P O E T R Y

Translated from the

I S L A N D I C L A N G U A G E.

BIR IF ARIK YIA F.  
YRIF YAIR F \* N A A.  
\* N P I T Y I M I F M Y.

\* \* \* *Egill's Ode.*

FRIYNY BIR IF BRAP F  
NR BINYNIYNY \* I N Y.  
MIRIY F YIA IF F I I A.

*Regner's Ode.*

— Populi, quos despicit Arctos,  
Felices errore suo, quos ille timorum  
Maximus haud urget leti metus : inde ruendi  
In ferrum mens prona viris, animæque capaces  
Mortis ; et ignavum rediturae parcere vitæ.

LUCAN.

L O N D O N :

Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall-mall.

M D C C L X I I I.

N. B. THIS LITTLE TRACT WAS DRAWN  
UP FOR THE PRESS IN THE YEAR 1761:  
BUT THE PUBLICATION HAS BEEN DELAY-  
ED BY AN ACCIDENT.

# P R E F A C E.

*T*HE ancient inhabitants of the northern parts of Europe are generally known under no other character than that of a hardy and unpolished race, who subdued all the southern nations by dint of courage and of numbers. Their valour, their ferocity, their contempt of death, and passion for liberty, form the outlines of the picture we commonly draw of them: and if we sometimes revere them for that generous plan of government which they every where established, we cannot help lamenting that they raised the fabric upon the ruins of literature and the fine arts.

Yet is there one feature of their character of a more amiable cast; which, tho' not so generally known, no less belongs



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*to them: and that is, an amazing fondness for poetry. It will be thought a paradox, that the same people, whose furious ravages destroyed the last poor remains of expiring genius among the Romans, should cherish it with all possible care among their own countrymen: yet so it was. At least this was the case among the ancient Danes, and from the similarity of their religion, manners, and customs, is equally credible of the other nations of Teutonic race.*

*The ancient inhabitants of Sweden, Denmark and Norway retained their original manners and customs longer than any other of the Gothic tribes, and brought them down nearer to our own times. The remoteness of their situation rendered access to them slow and difficult: nor was it till the tenth and eleventh centuries that  
christi-*

## P R E F A C E.

*christianity had gained an establishment among them. Hence it is that we are better acquainted with the peculiarities of their character, and have more of their original compositions handed down to us, than of any other of the northern nations.*

*Of these compositions a great multitude are extant, some of them in print, others preserved in MS in the libraries of the north. All of them demonstrate that poetry was once held there in the highest estimation. The invention of it was attributed to the gods, and ranked among the most valuable gifts conferred on mortals. Those that excelled in it, were distinguished by the first honours of the state: were constant attendants on their kings, and were often employed on the most important commissions. These bards were called by the*

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*significant name of SCALD, a word which implies "a smoother or polisher of language."\**

*The LANGUAGE in which their productions are preserved, and which once prevailed pretty extensively in the north, is commonly called ISLANDIC: Iceland being the place where it was supposed to be spoken in the greatest purity, and where it is to this day in use. The Islandic is the mother of the modern Swedish and Danish tongues, in like manner as the Anglo-saxon is the parent of our English. Both these mother-tongues are dialects of the ancient Gothic or Teutonic; and of so near affinity, that, in the opinion of*

\* SKALD a depilando dicti videntur, quod rudem orationem tanquam evulsis pilis perpoliunt. *Torfæi Prefat. ad Orcades.*

The name of BARD also [Isl. *Barda*] was not unknown among the Islandic poets.