

I have presented a translation of the text within the monument in full. Let me now resume my analysis of the verses as they appear in sequence on the remaining walls, considering derivatives and parallels of the ideas presented in them, with a view to seeing the deeper design in its entirety.

As the hieroglyphs advance upon the walls, there is a destination of understanding, and it has to do with the eye. We are used to ideas that you can't see, to religion as faith in hidden things, but this is about the visible world. Hieroglyphs are not recondite or indecipherable. They are metaphors drawn from physical reality itself, tactile, observable, knowable, and in its essence universal and true.

There is an axis at the center of a wheel. The wheel is time as the variegated circling of the sky. Time is the hidden intelligence of the sky, the glittering path of rising stars, the moon as a gradually closing and opening eye. The axis is a column, the axis is a tree, the axis is the fixed star around which the sky turns. The axis and the wheel together are eternity.

### *The Axis and the Wheel*

Circe is the circling sky as seasonal time, *Mary* draped in blue and gold, surrounded by animals in a manger, the bull (thunder) and the donkey (as the Set animal because of its exaggerated ears, the meaning of which is the storm as chaos). Both animals are qualities of the changing sky. The series of transformations presented on the first wall of the Pyramid of Unis are a progression

of iconographic identifications with nature as time. Does the origin of the idea of reincarnation lie in the sequence of poetic tropes that first appear here in the Pyramid Texts? Auden unknowingly mapped them out in his "alchemical" "New Year Letter":

O Dove of science and of light  
 Upon the branches of the night  
 O Ichthus playful in the deep  
 Sea-lodges that forever keep  
 Their secret of excitement hidden  
 O sudden Wind that blows unbidden  
 Parting the quiet reeds, O Voice  
 Within the labyrinth of choice  
 Only the passive listener hears  
 O Clock and keeper of the years  
 O Source of equity and rest  
 Quando non fuerit, non est

Robert Graves saw the progression as an ancient iconographic device that tracked the life and death of the turning year, and he called it the foundation of all poetry. Graves saw the poet as a shamanic figure who is absorbed into and identified with the circular movement of seasonal time. Indeed the word *poetry*, the Greek word *poew* (to make), in its original meaning is the place where language, nature, and religion meet, where a thing is not simply described but captured alive: the wild and potent life energy of the earth itself identified with fully and prompted on. The animals represent the elements—air, water, earth—to which they belong. They are, and the poet becomes, the dynamic movement in nature itself, the irrepressible flux and motion of life.

Graves saw the Garden of Eden as a scrambling of earlier religious iconography, and pointed out that the word *Eve* and the word *snake* are the same word. Mircea Eliade pointed out that the word *Eden* means permission (as in the Arabic phrase *edn-ek*, "with your permission," commonly used when walking through a crowded bus. It is the word for "ear," *weden*: "[May I have] your ear?" "Will you listen?"). Eliade wrote that Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden looked like a failed initiation ceremony, the result of which would have been the fruit: higher knowledge. The initiation failed, the permission was not given, and Adam and Eve were asked to leave. The imagery

appears repeatedly in the Pyramid Texts, where the snake in the tree is a dynamic metaphor for the human body (verse 27 of the antechamber east wall and elsewhere). The body is the tree. The snake is the life in it. They *are* Adam (a word that can mean "bone," "blood," or "flesh" in Arabic) and Eve (life). The iconography of Adam and Eve flanking the tree can be read as the male and female channels that flank the spine or central column in Tantric physiology. The merging of these internal male and female elements in the meditation practice of Tantric initiation prompts the rising of a serpent of heightened awareness through the tree of the body, the fruit of which is *omniscience*—described in Corinthians 13, "now I see through a glass darkly, but then face to face . . . then shall I know even as also I am known"—the quality of which is bliss, sweetness, an ever-expanding sense of nonduality, of selfless love.

Poetry is used in the original as a deliberate code to describe the numinous quality of reality, not a dark, sinister, archaic code but one of real delight and beauty: the one who gave birth but didn't know it, draped in a blue glittering cloak of stars, she whose crown is the crescent moon; the appearance of the three holy ones from the east, the stars in the belt of Orion, that presage the birth of the bright star, Sirius, rising in the field of rushes, the eastern stars at dawn. Resurrection is not a mystery. It is the fundamental nature of life on earth. Death precedes life. The only thing that is lost is the ephemeral human personality.

## *Antechamber*

### *West Gable: The Lotus Rises*

Both our organs of perception and the phenomenal world we perceive seem to be best understood as systems of pure pattern, or as geometric structures of form and proportion. Therefore, when many ancient cultures chose to examine reality through the metaphors of geometry . . . they were already very close to the position of our most contemporary science.

—Robert Lawlor, *Sacred Geometry*, 4

The escarpment that runs along the west bank of the Nile before the river breaks into what were once its seven deltas is lined with a series of geometrical experiments that took place over a brief period of a few hundred years in early dynastic Egypt. The experiments were worked out as geometrical problems of volume and alignment. A number of them didn't work in execution. Some collapsed. Some were "bent." But ultimately the goal of thought perfected into form was attained by means of the hidden mathematical keys to the structure of life on earth: pi and the golden mean, in the great pyramid at Giza, which is aligned with absolute precision with the North Star. The pyramids represent the working out of a system of geometry derived from triangulation using the stars. This method of triangulation connecting earth with heaven involved what we have come to call the Pythagorean Theorem, a method of calculation in which the triangle enables measurement. The religious system based on measurement that Pythagoras represents, whether

or not he was an actual person, belongs not to the Greeks but to the Egyptians, who perfected the giant triangular form as the three-dimensional resolution of the squaring of the circle. The subject of the text on the gables is the iconographic translation of this religious tradition, the translation of perception into form: the eye at the top of the pyramid, relating this oldest of religions to the Masons or geometers, the founding fathers of America, who put the eye at the top of the pyramid on the dollar bill as if to say "measurement began our might."

Linear time has a beginning and an end. Circular time is a pattern. The idea of history and progress, of an end of days, of looming disaster, belongs to linear time. But the circle is the realm of eternity. Pi is an imponderable. It is a kind of mirage. You are always approaching it, and yet it always recedes. It is the most useful mathematical instrument to have, but it is inherently inexact. It is the perfect illustration of the reality of an idea. It doesn't exist and yet it exists. Pi continues ad infinitum, which means you take it out to as many places as you want but you're still not there. Mathematics and science depend on exactitude, and with pi you can never arrive at exact knowledge. You cannot know what pi actually is. Pi is in fact infinity.

The text in the monument follows the motion of circular time, the motion of the turning sky. It reads from right to left in a counterclockwise direction, moving from north to west. The text now continues onto an isosceles triangle rising to the highest point of the central room within the monument, mirroring an isosceles triangle of text on the east side of the room. A new chapter has begun: the tone perceptibly changes to one of formality. The subject is more complex and relates to the architecture of the monument itself.

The west gable of the antechamber presents a progression of statements, some clothed in poetic imagery, some not, the ultimate point of which is the final verse: death is the pure sound of the wind in the reeds; it is emptiness. All that remains is the pattern. The point is the geometric underlay. The text is not merely descriptive but presents a layered meaning having to do with eternal life as the patterning of the energy body, and as the patterned movement of stars, signaling the turning of the sky and the seasons.

The question of orientation arises again here: how is the text fitted within the monument? This is the highest point of the west wall, a triangular slab of text at the top of the room, and the top of the writing in the room. It is mirrored by a triangular slab of text on the east wall. The central feature in this triangle on the west side is the rising of the hieroglyphic lotus, the bril-

liant bluish-white light of Sirius rising from the Nile, flickering like a living flame upon the horizon.

The dark sky mirrors the swirling flood, where *the pool of lilies glittering on the flooded land* recalls the Egyptian conceit that stars are blossoming, an eerily accurate perception of photosynthesis, that greenness is light. The perception is captured in the word *sha sha*, which occurs in both hieroglyphs and Arabic as the verb meaning both "to blossom" and "to appear in the dark," and in the origin of *blossom* in the Greek verb *blast*. *The green fields they are stars*, the stars blossom out of the dark as flowers blossom out of the black ground. *Al Azhar*, the rose, is *Zubra*, the planet Venus. *Noah* is the word in hieroglyphs for "flood." *Susan* is the hieroglyph for "lotus." Both words appear in this verse. The story is contained in the word itself. *Susannah* bathing among the lotuses is the lotus, rising up before *the aged shades*. The subject of the west gable is the still water after the flood, the beauty of ultimate stillness. The east gable is the thunderstorm.

The two gables represent the polarity of male and female, in keeping with the Egyptian technique of twinning. The lotus is the female. The lotus is the throne. The lotus has nine petals. *The nine gave birth to you*. Nine is three rising up: the triangle given three-dimensional form. The prayer flags are three, then nine, then eighteen, then twenty-seven, demonstrating a system of proportional increase and the essential relevance of the number nine. The meaning of nine is now pursued on the west wall of the antechamber, as the meaning of the two and the four was riddled out on the north wall. The square root of four is two, the square root of nine is three. They both represent three-dimensional increase, the form rising from the pattern. What is sought is the magical key, the pattern that lies beyond form, the invisible, eternal structure of life.

### Verse 1

*The pool of lilies glittering on the flooded land* would seem to be a reference to the Pleiades, the star cluster on the shoulder of Taurus, the name of which comes into English from the Greek word *pleiw* (to sail), the sailing stars. In Arabic they are *tiara* (the birds). The Pleiades have nine visible stars.

The first line on the gable begins where the last wall left off, with the eye. Hieroglyphs favor the noun, much as poetry favors the noun. First you look

at the thing. Then you consider what it does. The action follows from the thing. In much the same way, as always in writing, the first line presents the idea. The north wall ends with the introduction of the concept of the emergent eye, with the chant *Your eye is his, his eye is yours, the eye is green*. Here the concept of the eye is immediately taken up and elaborated upon. *The eye is green*. That the eye *is* greenness is indicated in the entranceway: *the eye is the essence of the reeds*. The eye is understood as both the animating miracle of life in things and the recognition of the thing in the mind, the naming. There is no separation between the two functions of the eye, for the intrinsic quality of the eye is light. The eye *is* sight, what enables sight and what is seen, the essential nonduality of knowing as being.

Thus *the eye in you is you, your essence, your child*: the falcon.

In other words the falcon is the eye, meaning the eye goes out. We know that the eye goes out because of vision, the mind sweeping out into the world, *the first circle is the eye*, the sweeping wave of the mind. The eye can be read as a verb or a noun, but there is no object in the line for the transitive action of a verb. There is undoubtedly a false distinction between verbs and nouns superimposed on the Egyptian, which may have intended a thing to have the shading of both, for the shading, not the crisp definition, gives life to the word. The underlying grammatical question distinguishing the two is the reading of the wave to indicate whether the eye is a noun or a verb. The wave, the letter *n*, is the connecting element in hieroglyphs. It is understood as the preposition *in* or *of*, but it functions as the subtle element that connects one thing to another. The wave connects the noun to the noun in the genitive and dative and the action of the verb to the noun. Two waves following a verb indicate that the action has passed, the verb is in the past tense. But here it is impossible to say which is intended, as the eye is a thing and its nature is motion. Ambiguity is the point, as in the following line:

*The great tremble as they see you rise with the book in your hand.*

*The book is the sword*: The words *book* and *sword* in hieroglyphs are the same word (*sh't/shot*). The distinction between them is made by the ideogram, the determinative, which can either be a book, a rolled papyrus bound with string, or a sword. Here both determinatives are included in the word. The papyrus is commonly used as a determinative to indicate a concept, an ab-

straction. One might think, though, that here a book, in the basic physical sense of an actual book, is what is meant. The book is *this* book. It is being read aloud. The religious ceremony depends on the book. The activation of the concepts presented in the book, the progression of the religious ceremony, happens when the words that are written in the book are read aloud. There is also the possibility that the words written on the wall of the sealed tomb were considered to be potent and active, able to read themselves aloud in the dark. The book offers something that the sword cannot: eternal life. Hence the book *is* more powerful than the sword. And it is more likely in this context than the sword: for if it is a sword, what sword? Weapons have not been mentioned in the text. The transformation of the dead soul into a star has nothing to do with combat. The book, on the other hand, is the instruction, the critical importance of which in the transformation is referred to throughout the monument, for the book, the words, are making this happen, at this moment. Thus the book is the sword that enables the conquest of death, much as Manjushri, the avatar of the intellect, holds a book in one hand and a sword in the other. A book is an axe to break the ice, one might say, of the Pyramid Texts, which have been frozen in stone for more than four thousand years. The word carries the living thing concealed across millennia.

*The snowy egret*, or cattle egret, is a bird so common along the Nile that it is called the *abu kherdan*, the friend of the farmer. Its nests fill the eucalyptus trees that line one of the main streets in Cairo, Taha Hussein Street. Its whiteness covers the rich green fields of the countryside where the birds fall in flocks across the wide expanse of emerald alfalfa like flakes of snow. This bird is the sign determinative for the verb *sda* (to tremble); a detailed miniature of the egret follows the spelled-out word. The use of the bird in the word indicates the subtlety of perception in hieroglyphs, for it is not the bird itself that trembles but its delicate long white feathers that tremble in the wind.

*The Dwat*: This primary word and concept occurs here for the second time in the text. The *Dwat* is *the starry dawn*, the blue-green luminosity of the sky that precedes the dawn. The word is a hand with a looped cord and an encircled star, as though the star has been captured by the hand, by the mind.

*The nine gave birth to you:* There is much to suggest that the nine are stars, in the passages where they appear:

The pelican rising foretells the nine, the great pelican twin

A sailor in the sky sees the truth the nine holy aspects of the  
distant falcon

May he rise, Unis, as the shining light rises  
O great holy nine, the wondrous gold one is raised high . . .  
Unis grasps the crown from the holy nine

The nine give their arm  
Among the nine the cormorant leaps up  
Nine great holy ones, this is what Osiris gives you  
May Unis be granted the nine lest he be destroyed

The miller of the holy nine in the temple

The subject throughout is the paradox of coming into being without physical mammalian birth, and appears here as *Unis rises between the thies of the nine*. The hieroglyphs are the pictures of two thies, *mnit*. The phrase seems to indicate that paradox is what is intended: the nine are diffuse yet give birth as a single entity.

### Verse 2

*The cobra and the vulture are the river and the desert:* The two animals represent the two opposing realities that are Egypt, north and south, wet and dry, river delta and rocky desert. The vulture is the immense griffin vulture, the terrifying *baanib*, with a wingspan of ten feet, a bird that soars up to eleven thousand feet in the sky. It is the bird that designates the words for both "death" (*mut*) and "mother" (*mut*), equating the two. Death is the mother. The mother is death.

*Of malachite born* is a reference to the sky having the essence of greenness, of life; the greenness of the sky is jewellike, it is the color of precious stones, the

*emerald, turquoise, malachite stars.* The antechamber ends with a description of *the malachite land*, a pure land made of precious green stone. The *kbadira*, or green forest where the stars are jewels in a vision of pure green light, is captured in a verse that appears in the nearby Pyramid of Tety:

Sung to the great She who strides across the sky:  
Sew emerald, turquoise, malachite stars  
And grow green, that Tety grow green, green as a living reed

Three concepts of coming into being are used on this wall:

*ms*: "to give birth": the paradox of birth without physical birth, it is related to the word for "to rotate"

*kbpr*: "to manifest" (spontaneously)

*kma*: "to be formed" (as if by hands; the hieroglyph is the boomerang, a thing that is cast out by hand and comes back)

This is another illustration of how the hieroglyphic disc of light cannot possibly be the sun or "the sun god Ra" but refers to light itself. If the disc is used to mean the sun, this line would read: "carried high on the path of the sun Unis rises as a star."

Truth, *ma'a*, is introduced here for the first time, spelled with a ruler and marked with a feather, meaning it has no weight or physical substance but resides in the measurable underlying pattern.

*The mantric pi*: The use of *pi* on this gable and at the end of the east gable on the opposite wall, where it stands alone, makes it clear that *pi* is used not as a part of speech but as a sound. A chant indicating that *pi* is a magical formula is indicated by the command *Do as commanded*, followed by the movement of the corpse, indicating that *pi* is used to prompt the dead to life.

*The mill*, *ndj*: The turning sky is a mill wheel. The reference to the mill wheel following the repeated image in the verse of the *iwn nywt* clarifies the

concept in this key hieroglyphic phrase. The *nywt* is the wheel, within which is the *iwn*, the axis.

*Manifested in the enclosure of arms:* The hieroglyphic picture is of embracing arms, bending inward at the elbows. This is how the infant is formed, born, and comes into being with the mantric sound. The arms are the arms of the stars, the Dippers.

*Broken exhausted weary:* A standard, formal address to Osiris that also appears in the passage to the sarcophagus chamber. The inert corpse is unwilling to come back to life. It is weary, asleep, broken, exhausted, yet, much like the Frankenstein monster, it is told to rise, to get up. It is an irony, for the corpse cannot get up, but the rising up of the energy within it is unstoppable.

*The eye is the bread:* The previous wall ended with the greenness of the eye and the words *may the bread fly up to the houses the houses of Egypt*. Now the eye itself is the bread; it is both time, as the creator of food, and beauty, as what is seen: the beauty of the sky and its stars. The phrase can also be translated *rise in the mill that makes your bread*, if the eye is read as a verb.

*The nywt p:* The circular surround of *p*. There is no other possible translation. It cannot be the unfindable “city of p,” or “city of pe.” The *nywt*, the circular surround, might be translated as “mandala” (from the Sanskrit for “wheel” or “circle”).

*Orion:* The master of storms, the constellation that rises at the time of rain; the word *orion* means “rising.”

*Set:* Chaos is the force behind everything, out of which everything comes. Everything in hieroglyphs is *tum*; the Arabic word *tum* denotes a sense of

both “complete” (as in the common doubling expression of this word in Egyptian Arabic today, *tamam*, “completely”) and “final,” meaning the negative (as in the idea of something being over, hence no more). As a word in hieroglyphs it means “the universe,” “the all.” This word appears throughout the Pyramid Texts and has been translated arbitrarily, sometimes as the negation of a verb, and sometimes as “the god Atum.” Verbal phrases in the hieroglyphic text have been routinely translated as “gods.” In this passage Set lifts the *tum*. Set does not lift the god Atum. Nature lifts the universe, the wheel of the stars, and with them Orion, and with him time, and with it everything that lives on earth: Geb is Gaia, the earth as matter. The father, the earth, like Osiris, is what decays.

*Form: Kma,* the boomerang, is the hieroglyph for “to create.” The verb is illustrated by a throw stick that goes out and comes back, an image that gives form the sense of spinning, being spun on a wheel. Orion, Taurus, and the Pleiades are visible in the blue-green light of the dawn, the *Dwat*, at this key moment of the year.

*The gates of dawn:* Waiting for Sirius to rise. The hieroglyph of the lotus is in the column on the uppermost point of the western wall.

*O aged shades:* The shades are ostrich feather fans, used to cast a shadow. This is the word for “shadow” and “shade.”

### Verse 3

*Joy:* The wordplay is on *lilies* and *joy: seshsesh, seshen, and reshret*, the sound of the lilies quietly rustling in the light wind. Unis becomes joy, *rsb*, which resembles the word *rsb* (to smell), conjuring the delicious scent of the flowers, as he enters the surround, the ring of fire.

*The truth is within the fire:* The transforming fire, the realm of origin; the false, the material, matter, the heavy, what decays, belongs, falls to the earth.

*The cobras that guard the night:* Of the great flood that rises with the great one (Sirius). Cobras emerge in heavy rain and flooding that forces them up out of the water-soaked ground. The star, the snake, and the lotus rise. The intrinsic quality of all three is rising: *pure are the stars of his appearance.*

#### Verse 4

*The kas=energies, reassembled as hearts=centers.* The hieroglyphs are three *kas* and three hearts with the verb “to reassemble,” according to the method within the book. The hieroglyph for wisdom is a prayer shawl; the holy book is a scroll and a prayer flag.

#### Verse 5

*The path of sprouting green:* In the hieroglyph for “path” here the mounds (the mounds of earth left by the receding flood) are sprouting.

*In the middle of the turning:* The middle of the turning is *bnw* (enclosure) *pbr* (turning). The hieroglyph is a twisting thread or path, and here introduces the idea of the labyrinth, the turning path of the stars.

*The head of the blossoming time:* Would that *ntr*, divine agency, give back the head of the (blossoming) time of sharp Sirius that cuts its throat under the sharp knife (of the horizon). There is a wordplay here on *spdt* (Sirius) and *spd* (sharp). The line illustrates how a story is a code, here used to describe the watching of the arc of stars, cut by the horizon at dawn, as a segment of time.

*That cuts the throat:* The image is of the slaughter of a bull; the head of Taurus is separated from Orion by the horizon. This is the head of the blossoming time. The sense here is immediate, as in the west wall entranceway: would that the bull rise, would that the sky now give back the bull’s head, and with it the body of Orion, and Sirius. It is the man with the bull’s head, Orion and Taurus together on the horizon, a designation for a segment of time within

the labyrinth, the twisting path of the stars. The labyrinth is the circuit of the *labros*, the double axe that is thunder.

*Is the circuit with the head of the bull and Orion:* Orion is the rain, the bull is the thunder; this is the arc of the visual measure of the stars that mark the growing season, meaning a span of time is measured by the dial-like movement of the arc of stars. Give to Unis the burning ones, or hurrying ones: the hieroglyphic word is *ss* (with a suggestive sound, like *sizzle*) with the meaning of both “burning” and “hurrying.”

*The spindle:* The verb “to spin” is marked with the hieroglyphic picture of a spindle. The word is introduced here and frequently used from here on about the sky. The three fates spinning the thread of life are the three seasons spinning the thread of stars.

#### Verse 6

*He flows forth as a white bird:* An arresting image captured by the beautifully drawn hieroglyph of an egret, the interchangeable white bird that stands for the soul.

*Lift up your face, stars in the dawn:* *The shore of light* is the *luminous horizon* used here, as later in Lucretius and Edmund Wilson.

*The living words:* The hieroglyphs are alive because they survive death.

#### Verse 7

The west gable ends with this verse, in which the hieroglyphs are clumps of reeds:

Pure is he who is washed in the field of rushes,  
Pure is the light in the field of rushes



Pure is he who is washed in the field of rushes,  
 Pure is Unis, who is washed in the field of rushes  
 The arm of Unis is in the bright arm of Night  
*Iw seshw sw*  
*Iw seshw sw*

It is the sound of the wind. The words mean *let him be free, let him be free* or *he is empty, he is empty*.

Shu: The sound of the wind, *whoosh*, the word for “wind” and “air” and “free.” The wind is conjured as if by shamanic mimicry; the tactile sense of the concept arises in the sound. The feather defines the word. A feather is weightless, hence it is empty. Because it is weightless its motion is a delicate mechanism for indicating the strength, direction, and speed of the wind. You cannot control the path of a feather through the air. This is why the feather defines the word for “truth.” This phrase can also be translated as *he is the wind*, echoed in the Egyptian Sufi phrase chanted over and over as a self-intoxicant, a yogic breathing technique: *huwa hawa, huwa hawa*—“he (*huwa*) is the wind (*hawa*),” the hidden nature of the divine is the word *nefs* (to breathe). It is the word *nefs* (“self and soul”). The soul as breath is weighed in the scale against a feather. The swelling flood of the dawn drowns the reeds. What is left is the sound of the wind.

## West Wall: The Invocation of the Bull

### Verse 8

The west wall of the antechamber is the invocation of the bull. This passage offers an explanation of the spelling of the bull as the *ka*: it is the thunderstorm, pure electrical energy suddenly released. Such a storm feels even now like the dangerous, threatening presence of an enraged bull that pauses to paw the ground, and charges erratically forward with frightening force and speed, ever closer, in an approach of inescapable danger. A thunderstorm can kill. And yet it brings the rain that brings all life.

This is the great force in the dark that exists although it does not know

it, the bull of double brilliance, thunder and lightning. Here the text admits that it does not know what it is—is it the bull, is it Osiris—then it states, if nothing else it is the eye, the disembodied intelligence of the universe. Myrrh is used to conjure this presence, precisely as on the east wall of the entrance-way, where the presence was first introduced. A circle with two lines follows the introduction of the bull in the verse. The hieroglyph has been understood to mean a place name, Nekhen or Hierakonopolis, but why would the name of a faraway place be stuck in this powerful verse? It seems to be a reference back to the earlier passage, as the two passages clearly echo each other. There the double nature of the bull was indicated by two shining discs of light. Here there is a single disc with two lines in it. Fire and heat first came to earth from the horn of the bull striking the ground, from lightning. The passage begins with a signal or stage direction for burning incense and directing its smoke; the hieroglyph is *idy*, the picture of a hand with the smoke of incense pouring off it. Then there is a first invocation:

*great unknown spirit from the dark*

*qbaw ka r qhat* (the phrase involves the blurring of *q*, *b*, and *k*, gradations of which are often confused in Arabic regionally) *qbaw ka* (mourned spirit) *r qhat* (from the tomb—the hieroglyph is the picture of the tomb). This is a poetic phrase where the words run together and echo each other.

*The eye that is upon the throne: Osiris.*

*The eye is the thunder:* In the story of “The Destruction of Mankind” in the Ramesside *Book of the Divine Cow*, the divine being sends down the eye in order to destroy mankind, “let it take the form of . . .,” meaning the eye manifests in different forms.

The energy of the dead is absorbed into the powerful force conjured on this wall: not the belief that there is a bull in the sky but a sense description of the violent electrical force that exists, although it does not know it. This is an honest appraisal of a great force of nature that acts, and creates a result, as though by intention. It can be characterized, but it is not a character. This is the opposite of myth. It is not about personalities but about trying to conjure with words the essence of the force. And it explains the iconography of Osiris, a name for an unnameable thing: the directing intelligence and power

of the inextinguishable force of nature, in which death and decay are simply a passing phase. It is not life versus death, or faith in a life after death. It is the inevitability of life, and the irrelevance of death.

One can feel the eerie power of the invocation of this spirit, the inevitability of the rising energy of life from the dissolution of mere matter, mere form. Jane Harrison in *Themis* gives this insight into the iconographic riddle pursued here:

Pythagoras, Porphyry tells us . . . underwent a purification . . . by a thunderbolt or thunder-stone . . . not so strange an implement of purification as it might at first sight appear. Celts or stone-axes over a large portion of the civilized world are . . . taken to be thunderbolts . . . Porphyry then goes on to enumerate the various ceremonies gone through during initiation. Pythagoras had to . . . go down into the cave . . . there he had to spend thrice nine days, and then at last he was allowed to gaze on the throne . . . Was the throne really empty? . . . Zeus in human shape was not seated thereon . . . but his throne may . . . have been tenanted by a symbol . . . even more powerful than . . . himself—his thunderbolt. The thunderbolt was to the primitive Greek not the symbol or attribute of the god, but itself the divine thing . . . The human child completely replaces the thunderbolt . . . child and thunder-stone were one. When Kronos was about to swallow Zeus, what is it that Rhea gives him and that he really swallowed? A stone in swaddling clothes. By such a stone was Pythagoras purified . . . We have definite evidence that in certain mystery-rites thunder was actually imitated by bull-voiced mimes . . . Aeschylus [describes them in a fragment from] the lost *Edoni*, "And bull-voices roar thereto from somewhere out of the unseen, fearful semblances, and from a drum an image as it were of thunder underground is borne on the air heavy with dread."

*Lifted from the father:* The eye is lifted from the throne. The falcon is lifted from the corpse, the earth. The hieroglyphs form a poetic line, doubling the sound in "father," *ft, fet m ift*, much as the English translation does in the line *lifted from the father*.

*Earth, do not speak to him:* Call him back. Do not look back lest you be contaminated by the gravity of earth. The earth pulls back the rising star of light and heat into cold decaying matter.

*Lest he fall:* The verb is *wakh* (fall); it is the same word in Arabic and appears in English as the star Vega, *waqia*, literally, "the falling one."

*Finding on his path* (the path of the rising star): The language is poetic and the quality is fragmentary: lifted up from his father the earth, earth do not speak to him lest he set/fall. The story is Orpheus and Eurydice, that the words will draw one back.

*Finding on his path . . . water* (*Gmy m wat f wnm f nefsw mwmw*): *Gm*, "to find," is the curlew, with its scimitar beak in the sand; the *y* makes it a participle: *gmy m wat*, finding on his path, his *wnm*, his food.

*Nefsw mwmw*—the same phrase appears in the "Cannibal Hymn" on the east gable, finding on his path his food, the breath of the wind, *nfs*, and water water, *mw mw*; the Arabic word for "water," *moiya*, comes into English as the letter *m*, which is the picture of a wave. Here the word is doubled because it is a pun on *mymy*, the name of the giraffe, the hieroglyph that immediately follows it in the column, connecting the two words in the visual pun. The giraffe is the verb "to see beyond," "to foresee." What is foreseen is the pelican. This coded line is an astronomical riddle. *The pelican rising presages the nine, the great pelican twin.*

*He flows forth as an egret, he rises as a pelican:* The pelican, like the stork and the egret, the crane and the ibis, is a white bird that rises from the earth. Once these white waterbirds rose in the thousands and fell like snow on the Nile. What are the nine that comprise the great pelican twin, and how does the pelican relate to the giraffe? As one begins to see that the poem is a progression of specific astronomical references, a good guess is that this line and its iconography, which appears on predynastic combs and knife handles, may indicate that the Pleiades were used as a calendric sighting device,

presaging the rising of the head of Taurus with Aldebaran, its red eye, directly beneath it on the diagonal of rising stars. We continue to go back into the dark night, back in time. The word *psdj* (nine) is a pun on the word *psdj* (to shine).

The pelican rises, presaging the rising of the constellation that twins the actual bird. The double meaning is that the pelican presages water. The dove in Noah's Ark is the shining white seabird. When you see the white pelican you know that water is near; when you see the Pleiades rise at dawn you know that the flood is imminent.

*A sailor in the sky . . . the distant falcon:* This wall is an invocation of the bull. The bull is preceded by the Pleiades. There seems to be some sort of regular pairing of the pelican and the giraffe. They appear together on a pre-dynastic knife handle and two combs, one marked with a star that would seem to indicate that it is a calendric device involving the reading of stars. The coded meaning is signaled in this verse. In the hours between midnight and dawn in mid-July, the star groups rise in this order: the Pleiades on the shoulder of the bull, the head of Taurus, then the headless body of Orion, then at the moment of dawn, Sirius, rising as bright as a flickering planet on the horizon.

Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion: Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season: or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth: Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee? Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go and say unto thee, Here we are?

Is Job 38 a refutation of the Pyramid Texts?

*Tantra: the spell of the twenty-seven ta ntr:* The word *ta-ntra* appears here in the text: the holy ground. The twenty-seven refer back to the first verse on the east wall of the entranceway where the twenty-seven *netcherw*, holy things or spiritual aspects, obey the words that are being read aloud, with the burning

of myrrh and the invocation of the bull of double brilliance. Here the words of the spell are doubled, repeated for power:

*mdw di*=spell given

*ntrw ta*=tantra

*dni dni*=dam the dam

*dmdj dmdj*=reassembled reassembled

*sma sma*=joined together joined together

*mr mr*=the canal canal

Dam the dam

Of the reassembled, reassembled

Joined to the light

Within the canal canal.

The serpent appears as the letter *dj* in the word *reassemble*, but its picture is the clue to the riddle of what is happening. It is an unusual composite hieroglyph, repeated twice: the picture of a serpent with a feather on its back, rising above the tomb, is the energy of life translated into air/space/emptiness. The feather is the sign for both floating up and truth. In this spell, as in Tantra, the body is conflated with the sky, the spine with the Milky Way. Intense heat is being generated within the body to make the serpent rise. The riddle of the Milky Way as the spine is the hinge into the sense of nonduality, the way into the cosmos. The serpent of life is prompted by the words of the spell to rise in the dead body, and then become the rising eye that is the pervading force of power and movement in the sky.

*The serpent is the bird:* The hieroglyphic serpent has wings, and rises into the air over the dead body. The dam and the canal are Egyptian inventions for the mastery of water. Here they contain and preserve the sweet influence of Pleiades: the flood and the rain. Then the verse puts the canal in the body. It is the vessel out of which the two sons flow, the banks of which are scorching hot.

*Secret are the ways:* The physical methods of Tantra are secret and difficult to achieve: the generation of intense internal heat that prompts the rising and

emergence of the internal serpent. The paradox has to do with the essence of alchemy, water and fire. Water would normally be in a canal, but fire and light are in the canal in the sky, and in the canal in the body.

*What is in the jar flows out: the body is a broken jar:* The hieroglyph is a picture of a broken water jar and occurs again as the body in the passage to the sarcophagus chamber. The jar contains two sons, Caliban and Ariel, garlic and sapphire, the darkness of earth and the blueness of sky, the dark serpent and the white bird. The movement of both, the sliding of the snake, the gliding of the bird, are implied in the flowing out. The sound grows from one word to the next: *mskt skr* is the beaten (*skr*) Milky Way. The Milky Way is both beaten, in the sense of trodden, and beaten in the sense of beaten metal.

The idea of becoming something that is already there: one becomes the twin of Osiris, and with this has the power of Osiris, the power to overcome death. This "one lord" is both concrete and ineffable, both simple and profound, and raises the question of what Osiris actually is, the rotting corpse resolved into energy. The corpse contains the serpent, the white serpentine spinal cord, the source of the body's movement, electricity, sense perception. The snake sheds its skin as the electrical energy of the spinal cord moves upward from the spine. The similarity of the umbilical cord to the spinal cord suggests an Egyptian etymology for the non-Greek word *omphalos* (a word that is used to mean "the center, the eye, and the navel") as *m pr*, "what rises." This would explain why *omphalos* means "the eye," and also "the center," and also "the thing that rises up" (and comes into English as "umbilical," the cord of life). The text goes from the sky back to the body, with the Tantric spell, then back to the calendric arc of water stars that contains the bull.

*The circuit with the head of the bull and Orion is the Labyrinth:* The Minotaur in the Labyrinth is Orion, a headless body of a man, joined with the bull's head of Taurus on the path of the sky. The two constellations form the calendar sign for the growing season. The Labyrinth, the circular path of the *labros*, the double axe or thunder, is the path of the stars in the growing season when the Minotaur, literally, the "threatening bull," is seen in the sky. Herodorus

describes having seen the original labyrinth, still intact, on his visit to Egypt, as a temple of myriad small rooms, as though the king would act out the progression of the Minotaur through the rooms or thrones of the stars, as a sort of ritual progression or dance.

*The monkeys in the circuit are the heads:* The three monkeys are where the head should be on Orion, the three faint stars. Thus he is able to tie on another head instead, the head of the bull. It is Unis who ties the head. Unis is merged with Orion. The circuit with the head of the bull and Orion must be restored for the growing season to commence, and it is about to come back; within its garments are all the offerings it gives you. Its garments are the moving stars. Time is not separable from the evolution of forms, the integrated net of things coming into existence and passing away. The rain star is Aldebaran, the red eye of the bull; the horn of the bull is lightning. The entire passage conveys the column of stars: Aldebaran to Sirius, causing and mirroring the events on earth. The eye is lifted by the falcon. The turning sky lifts the eye. *Hsf*, the hieroglyph here, is the spindle. The sky is spinning. The Greek motif of the three fates having between them a single disembodied eye spinning out life as a linear thread to be cut are the three seasons, the precincts of stars that dominate each season, spinning the thread of rising stars, lifting the eye. The original Egyptian version is circular. The bull flows out into the spinning sky. Flow here is *shp*, the word used for the two sons flowing out of the body. The sky is a green marshland. The hieroglyphic details of the marsh are exquisite. The verse opens into a passage echoed fifteen hundred years later by Hesiod, advising farmers to pay attention to time as the interweaving of the stars and plant and animal life on earth. The poem then turns the bull in the sky into the actual animal. The timing of plowing in the rich, black earth of the overflow of soil from the Nile flood, with the domesticated, castrated bull, followed by the time of planting the seeds, is signaled detail by detail in the circuit of stars. The bull in heaven prompts the bull on earth. The bull in heaven, domesticated for use, mirrors the bull on earth, harnessed to the plow.

A second invocation begins with the burning of incense and, like the invocation of the bull, refers back to the passage on the east wall of the entranceway. Now the falcon of old is conjured, the horizon of the falcon of flame. On the east wall of the entranceway the words are *Unis becomes the bull of*

*double brilliance in the midst of his eye. His mouth is stable in the beat. Unis has the horn of the Lord of the South, the falcon of old.* In this first passage it is clear that the falcon and the bull are one. The falcon has horns and is from the south. There are clear indications from the invocations on this wall that the Pyramid Texts belong to a cattle cult from “the old days” beyond the Nile Valley. One looks to the predynastic archaeological site at Nabta Playa in the Western Desert a hundred miles west of Aswan, where stones are set up in a ring as an astronomical observatory, and around them are elaborate cattle burials. The passage explains the iconography of the bull on the Narmer Palette, and suggests strongly that this is the same system, where the king is identified with the bull of heaven. The hieroglyph appears in the phrase that states that the soul of the king as the bull is the open eye of the storm, whose father is the wind. The storm is *nshny*; the hieroglyph is the wild dog facing the arc of lightning, over which arches a rainbow. This is called the power of the perception of the falcon, that is, the tracking of stars, which tells you what time it is: what the weather is going to do.

Al-debaran: The red eye of Taurus is a common word for “bee” (like Deborah, the bee, or prophetess, in the Old Testament). The color red is like the red pain of the sting of a bee, and the red rage in the eye of the bull. Taurus also contains *al nath*, the wasp.

### Verse 10

*Its essence is an eye thrust out:* The eye is created from the fire of his serpentine light body, its essence is an eye thrust out. If the initiate is not prepared for this process, the rising of the heightened electricity of the internal eye will burn you. This is a description of the generation of internal heat that accompanies the rising of the internal serpent. This passage explains both the fire-breathing dragon and the third eye. The fire-breathing dragon is the third eye, consciousness as a shadow of electrophysiology.

*A sailor in the sky sees the truth:* *Ma'a* (truth) is the subject of the next wall. Again in this line the word for “truth” is paired with and closely resembles the word *maa* (to see). In other words, *the truth is seeing.*

*The keening of his sister, the green serpent:* This is readable, both visually and aloud, as the Egyptian lament tradition, which exists among Egyptian peasant women to this day. It is a kind of ritual improvisational poetry filled with imagery and repetition that sounds like the shrill sobbing of inconsolable grief. The poetry is a kind of formalized grief that functions as catharsis.

*He has gone to the sky with the wind with the wind:* The hieroglyph for “wind,” repeated down the column, is the full sail, the wind, the wind. Whether this means he is lifted up to and across the sky with the wind or he has dissolved and is in the wind, is empty space, no longer exists, lies in the key phrase—we don’t know whether he crosses the sky or ceases to exist; we don’t know, but in essence the elements of his body flow upward to the sky. The serpent, his sister, is the Mistress of P, the sound that prompts the transference of consciousness in the Tantric death ritual called *pe-wa*. As a commentary on the *pe-wa* process states, when you strike your breast and say the syllable *pe*, your spirit goes to the sky. The ultimate sound is the wind that sweeps it all away, the ultimate truth. Beneath the flow of the wind, the flow of motion, all the cyclical changes of the world are measured in moments as degrees on the horizon.

The wall seems to focus on the rising of the Pleiades and Aldebaran, here called the rain star. The line *They see this as the bull in the sky* explains what the Egyptians are doing: they are coming up with a system of visual cues for reading the sky and tracking time. The entire passage explains how the sky mirrors the earth in the production of food via the circuit with the head of the bull and Orion. In the midst of this turning labyrinth is the path of sprouting green: the rising stellar arc of the Pleiades, Taurus, Orion, and Sirius. In it the bull is three things: Taurus, thunder, and the bull on the ground, gelded as an ox that plows the fields. All three result in the crops that become food.

The most remarkable element on the wall is the presentation of a Tantric formula, called on the wall the *ta-ntr*, in which the reassembled body is joined to the light, the body becomes light. It is the generation of the light body. Tantric methods are specific instructions to be followed to the letter, a closely guarded secret because they are dangerous. The canal in the body becomes scorching hot as the vessel out of which flow the two sons, the serpent and the bird.

## South Wall: Initiation into Heaven

### Verse 1

*The two truths:* The south wall is the initiation ceremony for the soul as it is admitted into the sky. It begins with a discussion of the two truths, the ultimate emptiness of the human being who has died, and is reconstituted as light. This entity is now presented to the primary forces in the sky. These forces are introduced as riddles—*It is said of you: he is pain*—within an introductory formula that is a palindrome, *he knows you, you know him*, and a tongue twister, *stchtcbw irchtsw stchtsw irchtw*, again showing the use of words as multifaceted, magical vehicles that make things alike, and make things happen. The dead soul, his *flesh washed away in the lake of the wolf with water from the arms of light*, is introduced to great Isis, who first appears in the form of the hieroglyph itself: a chair he climbs up on as a little child. She gives *him her breast so that he may drink the milky-white light of the stars and never thirst or hunger again*. The soul of the dead king then undergoes the initiation. As in a Tantric initiation, the initiate merges with the mother in order to be reborn. The mother is the sky. The child is the rising star.

The first word is the foreleg of a cow, a name in hieroglyphs for the Big Dipper. The foreleg is followed by three reeds, the common word in hieroglyphs for what it represents, phragmites, the marsh reed. It has been interpreted here as the word for “father” (*ift*), because the assumption has been that the text must be about fathers. But the most significant element in the word for “father” is missing here, the horned viper, the letter *f*. Hence the reading of this line is more likely to be what the line visually represents: *O by the foreleg in the reeds*. The other translation, *by the strength of the fathers*, does not seem terribly relevant, while the field of reeds has just been described on the previous wall. The reeds are the stars. The foreleg of the cow in the reeds is the swinging of the arm of the great clock of the sky. Hence the hieroglyphic phrase would introduce the instruction that follows, explaining the fact that the turning of the sky means a separating out of the elements of the composite, revealing the truth that underlies reality: ultimately there is nothing there. This is the concept of time as a revolving wheel, captured in the death of St. Katherine (the name of the highest mountain in Sinai) on the wheel that tears the body

apart. The essential theme is the turning of life into death into life, a series of stages of transformation. It is not a conceit but an actual unfolding, where words are used in a measured, repetitive way to effect the transformation.

*Ma'a herw the truth is vibration, sound:* The truth has a voice. One is deaf to the voice of the truth. This is the phrase discussed in verse 7 on the north wall, the vibration of truth that is the goal of a life. Are they deaf to the truth of the voice in the eye?

The line has the dimensions of both the actual and the abstract. The sound of the eye is thunder, as established on the previous wall. Thunder is the bull, the hidden power in the sky. The eye was invoked as the bull of double brilliance on the west wall, and here is its voice. But the phrase here, considering what immediately follows it, seems to mean, are they unaware of the truth of physical reality, the nature of life and death? The reality is this: there is a cutting apart.

This is a central concept in the Tantric physiology. The male and female essential drops of moisture in the composition of the physical person are separated at death. The Tantric idea is that one is formed from two coalescing drops of moisture that reside at the heart, the white drop of the father, and the red drop of the mother. Hence one is inherently both male and female, and this knot, these joined essential elements, separate when the wind enters the central channel in the process of dissolution at death, as a stage in the rising of the internal serpent that becomes the light body. The word for the drop of moisture in Egyptian, which appears here in both the masculine and the feminine in this line of hieroglyphic words, is an onomatopoeic word for “spit”, *tf, tftftftf*.

*This is a hearing—an obeying—of the two truths:* The hieroglyphic verb “to hear” is the picture of an animal’s ear drawn back, as an animal will pull its ear back in a posture of listening and obedience, hence the word conveys the concept of not only listening but responding and obeying. The sentence is plain and straightforward. These are common hieroglyphic words. They are well-known, and here they can only be translated in a way that belongs to the philosophical debate tradition of Buddhism; there is a hearing of the two

truths, an obeying of the principle of the two truths. *Ma'aty*, "the two truths" (*ty* is the dual form in hieroglyphs as in Arabic), embodies the essential Egyptian conception of twinning, of inherent duality. But more than this, the two truths are one of the central perceptions of Tantra: the nature of conventional (material) and ultimate (pure energy) reality. One might say that they are heaven and earth. Much as Thoreau and Emerson saw heaven as the world itself, pervaded with light, only we do not see it, the Tantric strives to see the two realities at once, the world of form and the underlying light of its dissolution.

*The wind is the witness or Emptiness is the witness or It is emptiness*: The onomatopoeic line echoes the end of the west gable, *iw seshw sw*. Here *metrw* is the word for "witness;" *iw sbw metrw*, *emptiness is the witness*. The text continues in the language of a Tantric instruction, the Egyptian version of which is physical reality: the wind itself is all that is left of a living thing. The line recalls the line in the last verse on the east wall of the antechamber: the two gates made holy, they whose form is air and moisture. These are the gates to the realm of form. There is a pun on the words for "instruction," *wdj*, and "separation," *wdj*. The separation is the instruction.

*Beloved country: ta mr*. The phrase *ta mr*, "beloved country," is the Egyptian name for Egypt today, *Masr*.

*Ma'at*, the embodiment of truth, marked with a feather, is the continuous, measured uncontrollable movement through space that is the natural order of things. The truth is the innate order of the universe that underlies life on earth as a physical reality. It is visible at any time and contradicts the assumption that death is the ultimate reality. The ultimate reality is the underlying order, and its pervasive beauty. Even disorder is ruled by, folds into, and emerges from the ultimate order. They are the two truths. The breakdown of the physical body at death is the mystery of form and emptiness. The wind is the witness, even as the death rattle itself, the expiring of the person through the mouth, the voice of the truth of the life energy leaving the body.

*The truth is in the fire*: A sailor in the sky sees the truth. The sailor is a star made of fire. As in Heraclitus, the ultimate reality is the fire of transformation.

*He is reunited within the waters*: The hieroglyph for "woman" is a vessel of water. The sky is the great mother, the dappled wild cow with its milk of white light, its water of life.

*He is reassembled within the mystery, the waters*: Elaborates the spell on the west wall, *reassembled and joined with the light; the body is a broken jar*. What it contains flows out.

*The rising cobra*: The spinal cord, the electrical essence of which sails across the sky.

*The truth is brought to him raging within the waters alive*: *Dndj* (rage) is the energy rising from the body as a snake. The hieroglyph for "rage" is the picture of a cobra rising from the skull of the bull. Rage, the primary quality of the bull, is the raw electricity usable in the manipulation of the energy in the body. The line seems to indicate that the soul as the initiate becomes the bull, and that the truth is the water of life, hidden in the sky. The Greek spelling of the Egyptian word for "truth" is *moira*, fate, which also means a measured section of the zodiac.

*The refuge is in his eye*: The text on the south wall is constituted of differently structured poems, some of them short and rhyming, as though to break the rhythm or seriousness of the overall content. This is a short embedded poem around the pun for "refuge," *nht*; refuge in *nkht* (strength).

*The sky is a mill wheel*: Bread is *brotos*, the Greek word for "mortal," what keeps one alive, as *aesh* in Arabic is both "bread" and "life."

*The sky is a dappled sail:* The quality of time is variegated. The sky is dappled with stars. The hieroglyph *sab* (dappled) is the skin of an animal with the tail hanging down, recalling the love of the dappled, the dappled horses drawn on the walls of Lascaux.

*Give him the attainment of the words:* The importance of the words themselves is made clear, for the words effect the transformation: *bring him the words*.

This is the first time in the text that things are meant to be repeated, four times, or seven times; hence one is entering a section of the text that is a significant ritual, and must be spoken in precisely the right way for effect. The next step in the initiation is protection: saying the words to effect the protection of the entity throughout the ceremony. The following step is the prompting of the descent of the light body, the invisible twin: he has broken the knots of the spine.

Here the hieroglyphs are accurate representations of the vertebrae. Then the line, echoing the same line in the passageway to the sarcophagus chamber, *what is in the jar flows out*.

The dead body is a broken water jar.

The soul is the green new shoot of his marvelous mother in the green fields of the stars, in an implicit conflation of plant and animal life. The text continues to elaborate on the nature of the two truths. The dead soul, Unis, becomes the departing of what is at once *the essence of earth and the essence of wind*, a paradox containing the contrast between the material and the air. In a further step it becomes fire in the wind. The spinal cord is the part of the human body that is understood to contain the contrasting elements of matter and electricity. The hieroglyph for pulling out the essence is the familiar device used even today for unspooling yarn. The image is of pulling, as though pulling out yarn. Thus the person is unraveled; as the spinal cord can be pulled from the body, the light body contained in the spinal cord is pulled out.

To the ends of the limits of space  
 Unis travels with the wind  
 The horizon kisses the king

Shen: The hieroglyph for "nose" is the word for both "smell" and "kiss." The holy forms open their swaying arms, a lovely image of the moving con-

stellations. His face is to the east, the ascending path; he travels the path of the rising stars.

*The open eye of the storm:* The eye is open: the hieroglyphic eye here has horns—horns mean "to open," *the open eye of the storm*.

Orpheus:

Orpheus, Osiris, and the other daimons who are torn in pieces and put together again [are simply] the Year.

—Jane Ellen Harrison, *Themis*

The second part of the text on the south wall of the antechamber is taken up with an extended repetitive liturgy that has clear affinities with Orphism, a religious cult introduced into Greece in the sixth century B.C. The earliest reference to Orpheus is in a fragment of Simonides (fr. 567) from that time, a verse that resonates with the imagery on the west wall of the entranceway:

And birds flew up around his head  
 And fish rose out of the blue-black water  
 At (the sound of) his beautiful song

Orpheus is the bridge between shamanism and poetry. Like Solomon, who controls the winds and the birds, Orpheus draws nature to himself. He goes into and out of the land of the dead alive, and ultimately is torn to pieces by a stream. The question has always been where does he come from. Orphism is associated with Pythagoras. The two religious brotherhoods in Greece strongly influenced the literary movement of the time, the poetry of Pindar, the linguistic formulations of Heraclitus. These religious brotherhoods had the elements of what we now associate with Eastern monasticism: celibacy, vegetarianism, nonharming, a belief in reincarnation, intense focus on scholarship, memorizing, memory. Pythagoras embodies one aspect of this system: mathematics. Orpheus another: poetry. What is the purpose of poetry, a form of writing that begins as the riddle? Poetry can be known by



all and understood by few, can be hidden in plain sight. Orpheus is not a person or a myth but an initiate in this ritual of the knowing and remembering of the soul. Orpheus as the embodiment of the *ma'a heru*, the true sound or vibration, both music and poetry, explains the *nfr* hieroglyph. It is the lyre of Orpheus that means both beauty and emptiness.

The outlines of the doctrine and the accompanying myth seem to have been roughly the same for the Orphics, Empedocles, Pindar, Hesiod, Plato and others . . . This rough uniformity suggests that the doctrine . . . entered Greece already formed and did not undergo its stages of development there . . . These new doctrines were embodied in poetry, often with attributions to Orpheus or other legendary poets. Plato regards inspired poets as equal revelatory sources with priests and prophets . . . The Orphic initiate is sometimes buried with a small gold plate engraved with the necessary words . . . The soul must perform a preliminary or partial demonstration of memory, by carrying over the confusing threshold of death certain lines. In one version the soul, approaching the guardians, is to declare: I am a child of earth and of starry heaven, but my real nature is of heaven alone. You know me . . . Sometimes the formula involves declaring the name of the guardians as a sign that one has known them in the past and hence belongs to their company.

—Thomas McEvelley, *The Shape of Ancient Thought*, 104–10

The secret cult of life in death is the Osirian cult of the snake, Ophis. The cobra hieroglyph rises from a basket, drawn up by the sound of a flute, suggesting an essential relationship between sound and form.

The universe of moving and static things is knit together by . . . resonance . . . moving inside them, continually making an indistinct sweet murmur like the humming of a bee . . . or like a swarm of black bees drunk on honey, whose resonances evolve the fifty letters, and from them, all poetry and all realized form.

—Philip Rawson, *The Art of Tantra*, 202–203, 204,  
quoting the Prapanchasara

### Verse 3

As in Plato's doctrine of recollection, knowledge is memory, and memory is release. The connection between words and things is memory. Memory is electricity, the lighting up of the mind. This formula of recognition is introduced as the first of three liturgies in the Pyramid Texts. It begins as a tongue twister, consisting of wordplays on the verb *rekb* (to know), with a quality of magical sound and visual palindrome:

*Stchtchw rchtsw stchsw rchtchw stchsw rchtchw*  
*Stchtchw irchtsw stchsw irchtw*

You know him, he knows you

The soul is introduced to the luminous entities in the sky. They are: the sun, the moon, Sirius, the stars in the dawn, the bull of heaven. There is a possibility that *st*, rather than simply being a particle that emphasizes the introductory pronoun, is a verb, and that this is a carefully worked out formula in which the verb *st* means "to kindle," "to light": *You light up that he be made known/He lights up that you know.*

The invisible movement of the vowels shading the words, shifting the meaning, creates the sense that the arrival of knowledge is a reconciliation between subject and object as all forms merge. Thus will I know even as also I am known. Rather than a name, a riddling description, posed as a question, introduces each celestial entity:

It is said of you, or, is it not said of you?

The sun: greatest of all who set

The moon: he fulfills the one

The falcon: he is pain

The stars: you are wide awake

The bull of heaven: he who quakes

The falcon is pain, for it prompts the flood that drowns people in their homes.

The moon here is Thoth as the ibis, with its scimitar beak as the lunar crescent, and its luminous white back. The meaning of the ibis is the crescent