

Translator

The gold was grayed and cold; the plates were thin.
What mystery lay captive in their runes?
His fingers, asking, traced them to begin.
Would history unlock its darkness soon?
Embalmed within the metal, robed in glyphs,
The absent millions whisper from the past;
He scans the ancient scrawlings thick with mist
Until their shadows dawn in him at last:
Each thought, unwieldy first, he hefts with sweat,
As though ideas were metal: heavy, dense;
He assays words in dozens, weighed then set
As heaven trains His prophet, seer, and lens.

To craft the words, to tell each symbol's pith,
The seer-apprentice fashioned, Joseph, smith.

—Gideon Burton