

Sarah Pett

Philae

The door of the south,
Where frontiersmen stand and watch
Elbowed dog-wise against the rumour
Of Africa.
The sky stretched,
A dirigible anchored to demotic towers -
Half-deserted, effluvial.

A surety of sound and shining light
To beat the breast against
And worship waist-deep in hands
That tilled the salty earth
No less than home.

The burden of Egypt,
The burden of the desert of the sea.
Fatness sluiced clean,
Streets emptied utterly into pits
Girded with chalk and bone.
Tarweed takes root and
Its appetite carves sharp to sign the paper,
Cleave the land.

In a time of dates that rot from inside out
And will not dry
The boat rocks on the water like a drum.