



Figure 9.4 “Sitting under sail”: Marguerite Yourcenar in a boat on the Nile beside the site of Antinoe, 22 January 1982 (Photograph: J.-P. Corteggiani)

poems we try to read. The various manuscripts that I have described here are the material communication of experiences from contingent and multiple histories. For me, they continually imply an empathetic question that is fundamental to our engagement with ancient texts, although it is rarely explicit: what would I – this culturally constructed consciousness that I call I – have felt if I were sitting in the chapel of Heqaib; not here, but there? Reading the same poem, not now, but then? Or in the Southern City under later kings, or in the Ramessid Village? Despite our limitations, we – the ancient, modern, and future readers – are all united in imagining the experiences of other (fictional) beings: not ourselves, but Sinuhe, the peasant, and the man weary of life. Through this process we can partly experience other cultural forms and other lives. In this sense, reading such ancient poems is perhaps one of the most subversive and liberating actions that we can take. And it is also something that we all – in our various ways – do together.

Appendix: Translations of the 12th-Dynasty Papyri

*Rows of books around me stand,
Fence me round on either hand;
Through that forest of dead words
I would hunt the living birds . . .*

Louise MacNeice, *Postscript to Iceland*, 1937 (1979: 74)

I here present translations of the three poems from the four 12th-Dynasty papyri (P. Berlin P 3022–5). In order to suggest the actual state of the copies, these translations indicate wherever possible:

all lacunae with [. . .];
mistakenly omitted letters and words with < . . >;
conventional omissions of the first-person suffix with (I);
letters and words that are superfluous with { . . };
corrections and additions made to the manuscript with ^{superscript};
text that has been erased but not rewritten over with ~~strike-through~~;
points at which the scribe refilled his pen with the sign |;¹
the start of new lines in the manuscript with numbers in superscript;
rubrics with SMALL CAPITALS;
comprehensively corrupt phrases are underlined with the probable emendation afterward in parenthesis thus: (>emendation).

¹ The pen-fillings were collated with the originals in September 2005 and April 2007. The position of many of the refillings is unclear and my indications are sometimes only tentative suggestions: the scribes often half refilled their pens, or simply moistened them, and not all of these semi-fillings are detectable now. In many cases the exact position remains very uncertain, particularly on the verso of B1 where the papyrus is stuck to the glass. The pen-fillings on the Pierpont Morgan fragments have been collated with color photographs and not the originals. As with the line-numbers, the position of these marks in the translation is sometimes necessarily approximate due to differences in word-order between the original and the translation.

The lost starts of *Sinuhe* and *The Eloquent Peasant* are restored in parentheses following the texts of the P. Ramesseum A; I do not indicate any manuscript features for these passages. The conflated renderings of Parkinson 1999c provide annotations and commentary (1999c [1997]: 21–88, 151–65, 287–8).

Manuscript 1 (*The Tale of Sinuhe*)

The Patrician and Count,
Governor of the sovereign's domains in the Syrian lands,
the True acquaintance of the king, whom he loves,
the Follower, Sinuhe says,
"I was a Follower who followed his lord,
a Servant of the royal chambers
and of the Patrician lady, the greatly praised,
the Queen of Senwosret in Khnumsut,
Am the Princess of Amenemhat in ¹Qa-neferu,
Neferu], the blessed la[dy].

Ye[ar 30, month 3 of Akhet, day 7:
The God ²ascended to his horizon;
the Dual King] Sehotepibre
[moun]ted to heaven,
and was united with the sun,
the divine flesh mingling with its creator.
The Residence was in silence,
hearts were in mourning,
An the Great Portal ¹was shut,
the entourage was] bowed down,
[and the patric²]ians were in grief.

Now his Person had sent out] an expedition to the land of ³[Libya],
with his eldest son as] its [head],
[the Perfected God ⁴[Senwosret;
[but now he was returning], having [carried] off ⁵[[Libyan] captives,
[and all sorts of cattle without] number.
[The ⁶Friends of the Court
sent to the western border
to inform the prince
Ao of the affa]ir which had happened [in the Audience Hall.

On the road the messengers found him.
Ap ¹They reached] him at night-fa]ll.
It was(>Not) a moment ²[did he wait at all];
the falcon flew off with his followers,
³[without informing his expedition.
Now, when the royal ⁴children
Aq accompanying him ¹on] this [expedition were sent to],
B they summon¹ed one of them.
Now, when I was standing on duty,
[I heard his voice ²as he spoke,
as I was a little way off.
[My heart staggered, ³]my arms spread out;
trembling fell on every limb.
[I remov<ed> ⁴[to] myself, leaping,
[to seek a hiding place for myself.
[(I) put ⁵myself between two bushes,
to make a way for its travell^{er}.

[I made ⁶my way southwards.
I did not plan to reach this ⁷Residence,
[expecting strife would happen;
[I did not think to live after him.
⁸]I crossed Lake Maaty{man} in the region of the Sycomore.
⁹]I came to the Isle of Sneferu.
[I passed a day <there> on the edge of ¹⁰]a field.
When it was day again, I made an early start.
[I met a man standing ¹¹in (my) way.
[He saluted me, and was afraid.
[When it was ¹²supper-time,
[I had arrived at ¹³[[Catt]]le-Quay.

[I crossed in a rudderless barge
¹⁴[[blow]n by the west wind.
I passed [east of the quarr¹⁵y
[above Lady] of the Red [Mountain.
I gave ¹⁶my feet a northwards [path,
and I reached ¹⁷the Walls of the Ruler,
made [to beat back the Syrians.
[I then ¹⁸crouched down in a bush
[for fear of being seen by the wat¹⁹chers
upon the mansion on ^{its} duty.

|I made my way ²⁰in the night-time.
 When it was dawn I had reached Peten.
²¹|I alighted at an island of Kem-ur.
 |Thirst's attack ²²overtook m<e>,
 and I was scorched, my throat parched.
²³|I said, 'This is the taste of death.'
 |I lifted up my heart, and ga²⁴thered |my limbs together,
 as I heard the sound of ca²⁵ttle lowing, and caught sight of Syrians,
²⁶|and a sheikh of theirs, who had once been
 in Egypt, {kne}recognised me.

|Then ²⁷he gave me water,
 while milk was boiled for me.
 |I went ²⁸with him to his cla<n>,
 and what they did <for me> was good.
 |Country gave me ²⁹to country.
 I set out for |Byblos; I got to Qedem.
 I had spent ³⁰half |a year there,
 when Amu^s son Nenshi carrie<d> me off.
 He was the ruler ³¹of Upper Tenu,
 |and he told me, 'You'll be happy with |me,
 for you'll hear the speech ³²of Egypt.'
 |He said this, knowing my character
 and having heard of ³³|my understanding,
 and the Egypt³⁴ians who were with him there
 had vouched for me.

|Then he said to me, 'Why did you come ³⁵here –
 |what is it? Has anything happened in ³⁶the Residence?'
 |'The Dual King Sehotepibre
 has gone to the horizon,
³⁷|and how this all happened is unknown.'
 |But I spoke in half-truths.
³⁸'I have come from the expedition land (>to) the Libyan land:
 |it was reported to me, and my heart ³⁹was aggressive (>failed)
 – my heart, it was not in my body –
 |and carried ⁴⁰me off on the desert ways.
 |I had not been talked of, |and my [face] had not been sp⁴¹at
 |upon;
 (I) had heard no reproaches; |my name had not been heard in the
 herald's ⁴²mouth.

|I do not know what brought me to this country –⁴³it is like a plan
 of God.'

'So how is that land
 with⁴⁴out him – that |worthy God,
 fear of whom is throughout ⁴⁵|the countries
 like Sekhmet's in a plague-year?'
 |I spoke thus to him, ⁴⁶to answer |him,
 |'Indeed<s>, his son has already entered the palace,
 and has ⁴⁷taken up the in|herit{erit}ance of ^{his} father.
 |Now, he is a God who is peerless,
⁴⁸|before whom no other exists.
 |He is a lord of understanding, excellent ⁴⁹of plans, effective of
 orderings;
 |coming and going are by ⁵⁰his command.
 He subjugates the countries.
 |His father stayed within his palace,
⁵¹|and he reported that what he had ordained was done.

|Now, he is a hero, ⁵²active with his brawn,
 a champion without compare,
 |see⁵³n descending on barbarians, approaching the combat.
⁵⁴|He is a horn-curber, who weakens hands;
 |his fo⁵⁵es cannot marshal troops.
 |He is vengeful, a smasher of foreheads;
 close to him ⁵⁶no one can stand.
 |He is far-striding, destroying the fugitive;
⁵⁷|there is no end for the man who shows him <his> back.
 |He is firm-hearted at the moment of forcing ⁵⁸retreat.
 |He turns back; he shows not his own back.
 He is stout-hearted, ⁵⁹seeing the masses;
 he allows no rest^(ers) around his heart.

⁶⁰|He is bold, seeing the grou<p>;
 his joy is ^{his} desc⁶¹ending on barbarians.
 |As soon as he takes up his shield, he tramples;
 he ⁶²needs no second blow |to slay.
 |None can escape his arrow, none ⁶³draw his bow.
 |Barbarians flee his arms,
 like ⁶⁴the power of the Great One.
 |Having foreseen the end, he fights and is heed⁶⁵less of all else.

|He is a lord of kindness, great of swe<et>⁶⁶ness.
 He has conquered <through> love.
 His city loves him more than <its> own members;
 it ⁶⁷rejoices at him more than at its God.
 |Men and women pass by, ex⁶⁸ulting at him.
 He is a king, who conquered in the egg.
⁶⁹|His eyes have been <on it> from birth.
 He makes those born with him |plentiful.
⁷⁰He is unique, of God's giving.
⁷¹|How joyful this land, since he has ruled!
⁷¹He extends the borders.

|He will conquer southern ⁷²lands, and has not thought <about>
 northern countries.
 |He was begotten to <str>ike Syrians, ⁷³to trample Sand-|farers.
 {de|S|c}end to him, let him kn⁷⁴ow your name,
 as a man far from his Person who enquires!
 |He will not fail to do go⁷⁵od
 for a country that will be loyal to him.'

|And he said unto me, 'Well, ⁷⁶Egypt is certainly happy,
 <si>nce she knows of his success.

⁷⁷|But look, you are here,
 and you will stay with me; I shall do you good.'

⁷⁸|He placed me at the head of his children.
 He join|ed m⁷⁹e with |his eldest daughter.

|He had me make my choice |of his country,
⁸⁰from the choicest of what was his,

|on his border with ⁸¹another country.
 It was a good land,
 called Iaa.

|Figs were ⁸²in it, and grapes;
 wine was more copious for it than water;
 great ⁸³its honey, plentiful |its moringa-oil,
 |with all kinds of fruit on its trees.

⁸⁴|Barley was there, and emmer, and numberless were all ⁸⁵<its> cattle.

|Now, what came to me as a fav⁸⁶ourite was great.

|He appointed me the ruler of a cla<n>
 of the choicest ⁸⁷of his country.

|Provisions were made for me with strong drinks,
 wine ⁸⁸as a daily supply, |and cooked flesh,

and roast ⁸⁹fowl, |as well as the animals of the country.
 |They would sn⁹⁰are for me. They would lay it out for me,
 |as well as the catch of my own hou⁹¹nds.
 |Many were made for me,
 with milk in ⁹²|every cooked dish.

|I spent many years,
 and my childr⁹³en became heroes,
 |each man subjugating ⁹⁴his clan.
 The messenger who went north and south to the Residence
⁹⁵would tarry for me. |I would make all men tarry.
⁹⁶I would give water to the thirsty,
 |and I returned the wanderer ⁹⁷to the pa|th and rescued the robbed.
 The Syrians ⁹⁸who became so bold
 as to resist the countries' rulers – ⁹⁹I spoke against their movements.
 This ruler of ¹⁰⁰Te|nu
 |would have me spend many years
 as the commander ¹⁰¹of his army.
 |Every country for which I set out,
¹⁰²then I made my attack,
 and it was |driven from its grasslands and |wells;
¹⁰³I plundered its cattle and carri<ed> off its inhabitants,
¹⁰⁴took away their foo^d.
 |I killed the people in it with ¹⁰⁵my brawn, with my bow,
 |with my movements, and with ¹⁰⁶my excellent plans.
 |In his heart (I) attained high regard;
¹⁰⁷he loved me, knowing my valour.
 |He placed me ¹⁰⁸as the headman of his children, |having seen the
 strength ¹⁰⁹of my arms.

|A hero of Tenu came
 to provoke m¹¹⁰e in my t|ent;
 he was a peerless champion, who had ¹¹¹subjugated it all.
 |He said he would fight with me, he planned ¹¹²to rob me,
 |and thought to plunder my cattl<e>, ¹¹³on the advice of his clan.
 |That ruler conferred ¹¹⁴with me;
 I spoke, 'I do not know him.
 |So am I some ally of his, ¹¹⁵to walk around in |his camp?
 Or does this mean that I've open¹¹⁶ed his private quarters,
 |lov<ert>urned his stockade?
 It is ¹¹⁷resentment at seeing |me do his missions.

H¹¹⁸ow like am I to a bull of the roaming-|cattle in the midst of
¹¹⁹another herd,
 whom the bull of |that little herd attacks,
¹²⁰whom that long-horned bull is charging.
 |Can an inferior ever be ¹²¹|loved as a superior?
 |No barbarian can ever all¹²²y with a Delta-man;
 what can establish |the papyrus on the mountain?
¹²³|Does the bull want |to fight,
 or the champion bull wa¹²⁴nt |to sound a retreat
 in terror |of being equalled?

¹²⁵|If he has the will to fight, let him speak his wish!
¹²⁶|Is God unaware of what is fated for him,
 or does He know how it ¹²⁷|stands?
 When it was night I strung my bow |and tried ¹²⁸my arrows,
 |sharpened my sword and polish¹²⁹ed my weapons.
 |When it was dawn, Tenu had come,
¹³⁰|having incited its cla{c}ns and gathered its neighbouring
¹³¹countries,
 |for it had planned this fight; and yet every breast bu¹³²rned
 for me,
 the wives jabbered, and every ¹³³heart was sore for me,
 |saying, 'Can the other man ¹³⁴be mighty enough to fight him?'

|Then his shield, his axe,
¹³⁵his armful of javelins fell:
 after |I had ¹³⁶escaped his weapons and had made them pass
 by me,
 with his arrows spent ¹³⁷in vain,
 |one after the other,
 |he approached ¹³⁸me, and I shot him;
 my arrow stuck in his ne¹³⁹ck,
 he cried out, and fell on his face.
 I fe¹⁴⁰lled{ed} him <with> his own axe,
 and I |gave my war-cry ¹⁴¹on his back,
 while every |Asiatic was bellowing.
 I gave praises ¹⁴²to Montu,
 while his serfs mourned for him.
 |This ruler Amu's son ¹⁴³Nenshi
 took me into his arms.
 |Then I carried off his pro¹⁴⁴perty and plundered his cattle.

What he planned to do ¹⁴⁵|to me, I did to him;
 I seized what was in his tent, ¹⁴⁶and stripped his camp.
 |With this (I) became great, and (I) grew copious of ¹⁴⁷wealth,
 |and plentiful of my cattle.

For now God has ¹⁴⁸|acted so as to be gracious to one with whom
 He was |offended,
 whom He led astray to ¹⁴⁹|another country.
 Today, He is satisfied.
 A fugitive takes fligh¹⁵⁰t because of his circumstances;
 but my reputation is in the Residence.
¹⁵¹|A creeping man creeps off because of hunger;
 but ¹⁵¹give bread to my neigh¹⁵²bour.
 |A man leaves his land because of nakedness;
¹⁵³|but I have bright linen, white linen.
¹⁵⁴|A man runs off because of the lack of someone to send;
 |but I am ¹⁵⁵plentiful of |serfs.
 Good is my house, spacious my dwelling-place,
¹⁵⁶and memory of me is in the palace.
 |Whatever God{s} fated this fligh¹⁵⁷t
 – be gracious, and bring me home!
 |Surely ¹⁵⁸You will let me see |the place where my heart still stays!
¹⁵⁹|What matters more than my being buried
 in a land where I ¹⁶⁰|was born?
 |This is (my) prayer for help, that the good event befall,
 that God ¹⁶¹|give me grace!
 May He act like this, to make well the end of someone whom He
 made helpless,
¹⁶²|His heart sore for someone He compelled
 to live in a foreign country!
 |Does this mean today ¹⁶³|that He is so gracious as to hear the
 prayer of someone far off
 |who shall then tu¹⁶⁴rn from where he has roamed the earth
 to |the place from which he carried him away?
¹⁶⁵|May the king of Egypt be gracious to me,
 that ¹⁶⁵I may live on his grace!
¹⁶⁶|May I greet the Mistress of the Land who is in his palace,
 |and ¹⁶⁷hear her children's |messages!
 So shall my limbs grow ¹⁶⁸young again, <f>or <n>ow old age has fall|len:
 |weak¹⁶⁹ness has overtaken me,

my eyes are heavy, [and my arms weak;
¹⁷⁰my legs have failed [and (my) heart follows weariness;
 [I am near ¹⁷¹to dying.
 [May they lead me to [the cities of eternity!
 May I follow ¹⁷²the Lady [of All,
 [and then she shall tell me that all is well with her children!
 May she pass ¹⁷³[eternity above me!

Now they told [the Person of the Dual King Kheperka(u)re, the
 justified
 about the state of a¹⁷⁴[ffairs in which I was.
 [And his Person sent ¹⁷⁵to me,
 with bounty of royal giving,
 to [gladden ^{the heart} of this humble servant
 like ¹⁷⁶any ruler of a country,
 [and the royal children ^{who} were in ^{his} palace let ¹⁷⁷me hear [their messages.

¹⁷⁸[COPY OF THE DECREE BROUGHT TO THIS HUMBLE SERVANT
 ABOUT HIS BEING BROUGHT BACK TO EGYPT:

¹⁷⁹[‘Horus Living-of-Incarnations;
 Two Ladies Living-of-Incarnations;
 <Golden Horus Living-of-Incarnations;>
 [Dual King Kheperkare;
 Son of Re ¹⁸⁰[Amenemhat
 – may he live for all time and eternity!
 [Royal Decree to the Follower Sinuhe:
¹⁸¹Look, this [decree of the king is brought to you
 to inform you that your roving through countries,
¹⁸²[going from Qedem to Tenu{country},
 country [giving you to country,
 was at the counsel ¹⁸³of your own heart.
 What had you done, that you should be acted against?
 [You had not cursed, that your speech should be punished.
¹⁸⁴[You had not spoken in the officials’ council, [that your utterances
 should be opposed.
¹⁸⁵[This idea carried off your heart –
 it was not in (my) heart against you.
 This your Heaven, who is in the palace,
¹⁸⁶endures and flourishes today
 [and her head what she tasted (>is covered) in the kingship of the land
 and her child¹⁸⁷ren are in the Audience Hall.

[YOU WILL STORE UP THE WEALTH GIVEN BY THEM,
 AND LIVE ON THEIR BO<UN>TY.
¹⁸⁸[Come back to Egypt!
 And you will see the Residence where you grew up,
^{kiss} the earth at ¹⁸⁹the Great Portal,
 and join the Friend^s.
 [For today you have alrea¹⁹⁰dy begun to be old, have lost
 [virility,
 and have in mind the day ¹⁹¹of burial,
 the passing to blessedness.

[A night-vigil will be performed for you, with holy oils
¹⁹²[and wrappings from the hands of Tayet.
 A funeral procession will be made for you on the day of ¹⁹³[joining
 the earth,
 with a mummy case of gold,
 a mask of lapis lazuli,
 a heaven [over you, and you placed in ¹⁹⁴a hearse,
 with oxen dragging you,
 and siⁿgers going before you.
 The dance of the ¹⁹⁵[Oblivious ones will be done at the mouth of
 your tomb,
 and the offering-invocation recited for you;
 sacrifices ¹⁹⁶will be made at the mouth of [your offering-place,
 and your pillars will be built of white stone
 in the midst of ¹⁹⁷the royal children’s.
 [Your death will not happen in a foreign country;
 [Asiatics will not lay you to rest;
 you will not ¹⁹⁸be put in a ram’s skin when your coff<in>
 is made.
 [This is too long to be roam¹⁹⁹ing the earth!
 Consider the corpse – and return!?

[THIS DECREE REACHED ME AS I STOOD IN ²⁰⁰THE MIDDLE OF MY
 CL{C}<A>N.

[It was read to me and (I) prostrated myself,
 I touched the ea²⁰¹rth
 [and scattered it on my hair/chest (>hair);
 I roved round my camp, shouting
²⁰²[and saying, ‘How can this be done for a servant
 whose heart led him astray to strange countries?’

|So ²⁰³good is the kindness which saves me from death!
|Your spirit will let me make ²⁰⁴an end
with my limbs at home!

[COPY OF THE REPLY TO THIS DECREE:

'THE SERVANT OF THE PALACE, SINUHE

²⁰⁵|says, "Most happy welcome!

Concerning this flight which your humble servant made in his
ignorance:

It is ²⁰⁶your spir|it, Perfected God, Lord of the Two Lands,
which is loved by the Sungod, and favoured by Montu Lord of
Thebes;

Amun ²⁰⁷|Lord of the Throne of the Two Lands,

Sobek-|Re, Horus, Hathor,

Atum and |his company of Gods,

²⁰⁸Sopdu-Neferbau-Semseru |the eastern Horus,
the Lady of Im|h)et – may she enfold ²⁰⁹your head! –
the council upon the Flood,

|Min-Horus in the midst of the countries,

Wereret Lady of ²¹⁰Punt,

Nut, Haroeris-Re,

|and all the Gods of the Homeland ²¹¹and the islands of the Sea –
may they give life and dominion to your nostrils,

lendow you with their bounty,

²¹²and give you eternity without limit,

all time without its ends!

|May fear of you resound ²¹³in lands and countries,

you having curbed the circuit of the sun!

|This is the prayer of a humble servant

²¹⁴|for his lord who saves from the West.

[THE LORD OF PERCEPTION, PERCEIVER OF THE PEOPLE,

PERCEIVES ²¹⁵|as the Person of the Cour<t>

what your humble servant was afraid to say –

it is like an <un>repeatably ²¹⁶|great matter.

O great God, equal of the Sungod in understanding someone who
willingly ²¹⁷serves him!

Your humble servant is |in the hand of him who enquires after him:

|O may (I) be placed at your disposal!

Your Person ²¹⁸|is Horus the conqueror;

your arms are mighty against all lands.

²¹⁹[NOW, MAY YOUR PERSON COMMAND THAT HE BE MADE TO

BRING |Meki from Qedem,

a Khen²²⁰tiu-iaush| from out of Keshu,

and Menus ²²¹from the la|nd<s> of the Fenkhu.

|They are <ru>lers who are well known,

²²²who live by love of you.

Without calling |Tenu to mind – it is yours, even like ²²³your
hounds!

|This flight which <your humble> servant made –

(I) had not planned it. It was ²²⁴not in my helart.

I had not thought of it. I know not |what parted me from <my>
place.

It was like ²²⁵the nature of a dream,

Like the sight of himself by |A DELTA-MAN IN ²²⁶ABU,

|a man of the marshes in Southern Egypt.

|I had no cause to be afraid; no one h²²⁷ad run after me.

I had |heard no reproaches; my name had not been heard ²²⁸in the
herald's mouth.

Only – |that shuddering of my limbs,

my feet ²²⁹galloping,

my heart overmastering me,

|the God who fated this flight ²³⁰dragging me away!

|I was not presumptuous before,

for a man respects him who is acknowledged by ²³¹|his land,

and the Sungod has put respect for you throughout the land,

and terror of you in every ²³²|country.

Whether I am at home,

whether I am in this place –

it is you wh|o veils ²³³this horizon.

The sun shines for love of you;

the water of the river

is drunk ²³⁴when you |wish;

the air of heaven

is breathed when you say.

|Your humble servant will hand over <to> ²³⁵|^[MY] THE CHICKS

WHICH YOUR HUMBLE SERVANT HAS BEGOTTEN |IN THIS PLACE.

²³⁶|A journey has been made for your humble servant!

May your Person do as you desire!

Men live on the breath of your giving:

²³⁷may the Sungod, Horus, and Hathor love
|these your noble nostrils,
which Montu |Lord of Thebes desire²³⁸s
to live for all time!

I was allowed to spend a day in Iaa,
²³⁹|handing over my property to my children;
^{my} eldest son |was in charge of my ²⁴⁰clan,
{my clan} and all |my property was his –
my servants, all ²⁴¹my cattle,
my fruit and |all my orchard trees.
This humble servant then came |south²⁴²wards,
and I halted at the Ways of Horus.
|The commander there who was in charge of the patrol
²⁴³|sent a message to the Residence |to inform them.

And his Person caused ²⁴⁴a worthy |Overseer of the peasants of the
royal estate to come,
accompanied by laden boats,
²⁴⁵and bearing bounty of royal giving
|FOR THE SYRIANS WHO HAD COME WITH ME,
LEADING ME TO THE WAYS OF HORUS;
²⁴⁶|and I announced each one by his name.
Every serving man was at his duty.
|I set ²⁴⁷sail,
with kneading and brewing beside me,
until I reached the harbour of Itjⁿ-{ta}.
²⁴⁸|When it was dawn, very early,
they came and summoned me;
ten men coming,
ten men ²⁴⁹|going,
ushering me to the palace.

|I touched the ground between the sphinxes,
²⁵⁰as the royal children stood in the portal, receiving me;
|and the Friends ²⁵¹who usher to the Pillared Hall
were showing me the way |to the Audience Hall.
²⁵²|I found his Person on the great throne
in the portal of electrum.
|Then I was ²⁵³stretched out prostrate,
unconscious of myself in front of him,
while this God ²⁵⁴|was addressing me cheerfully.
I was like a man seized in the dusk,

²⁵⁵|my soul had perished, my limbs were aggressive <failed>,
my heart |was not in my body.
I did <not> ²⁵⁶know life from death.

|AND HIS PERSON SAID TO ONE OF THESE FRIENDS,
'Raise ²⁵⁷him up, let him speak to me!'
|And his Person said, 'Look, you have returned after roaming
foreign countries,
after flight has made ²⁵⁸|attack on you;
you are elderly, and have reached old age.
|Your burial will be no small ²⁵⁹matter;
you will not be laid to rest by barbarians.
|Act against yourself, act against yourself no more!
You did not speak ²⁶⁰when your name was announced –
|someone frightened of punishment?'
I answered this with the answer of a frightened ²⁶¹of |a frightened
man:
'What does my lord say to me, {if}<that> I can answer?
|For this is no shortcoming ²⁶²of mine towards God, but is a terror
which is in my body like that which created the fate^d flight.
²⁶³|LOOK, I AM IN FRONT OF YOU, AND LIFE IS YOURS;
MAY YOUR PERSON DO |AS HE DESIRES!'

AND THE ²⁶⁴|royal children were ushered in,
and his Person said to the Queen,
'Look, Sinuhe has ²⁶⁵returned as an Asiatic,
an offspring of the Syrians!'
|She gave a very great ²⁶⁶cry,
and the royal children shrieked as one.
|And they said ²⁶⁷unto his Person,
'Is it really he,
|sovereign, my lord?'
And his Person said, 'It is ²⁶⁸really he.'
Now they had brought with them |their necklaces,
their rattles ²⁶⁹|and their sistra.
And they presented them to his Person:
'Your hand^(b)s upon ²⁷⁰{upon} the beauty, enduring king,
|the insignia of the Lady of Heaven!
|May the Golden One give ²⁷¹life to your nostrils,
the lady of |stars unite with you!
South-crown <goddess> fares north, North-²⁷²-crown
god<dess>south,

|joined and made one
in the words of your Person,
|on whose brow the papyrus (>uraeus) is placed!

|You have deliver²⁷³ed the poor from evil.
So may |the Sungod, Lord of the Two Lands, be gracious to you!
²⁷⁴Hail to you, as to the Lady of All!
Slacken your bow, withdraw your shaft!
²⁷⁵|Give breath <to> him who suffocates!
Give us back {y}our good outlay
²⁷⁶|as this sh|eikh, North-wind's Son,
|the barbarian born in the Homeland!
²⁷⁷|He took flight through fear of you,
he left the land through ²⁷⁸terror of you.
|A face that has seen your face . . . (>shall not) pale!
²⁷⁹An eye |that has gazed at you shall not fear!

And his Person said, |'He shall not fear,
²⁸⁰|he {has} <shall> not gibb<er>(ed) for terror!
He will be a Friend among ²⁸¹|the officials,
and he will be appointed |amidst the entourage.
²⁸²|Proceed to the Robing |Chamber to a²⁸³tend on him!
I went forth from inside the Au²⁸⁴dience |Hall,
with the royal children giving (me) their hands.
²⁸⁵|And afterwards, we went through the Great Portal.
²⁸⁶|I was appointed to the house of a prince,
|with costly things in it, with a bath²⁸⁷room in it
|and divine images of the horizon,
|with treasures in it ²⁸⁸from the Treasury,
|clothes of royal linen,
myrr²⁸⁹|h and kingly fine oil,
with officials whom he loved in every ²⁹⁰room,
|and every serving man at his duty.

|The years were made to pass from my limbs;
²⁹¹I became clean-shaven, |and my hair was combed.
A load was given back ²⁹²to the foreign country,
and clothes back to the Sand-far|ers.
I was clad ²⁹³in fine linen;
|I was anointed with fine oil.
I ²⁹⁴slept in a bed.

|I returned the sand to those who are upon it
²⁹⁵and the tree-oil to those smeared |with it.
I was given the house ²⁹⁶of a ??? (>Governor),
|such as belongs to a Frie|nd.
Many craftsmen ²⁹⁷were building it,
|all its trees were freshly pl^{ant}ed.
|Meals were ²⁹⁸brought{t} to me from the palace,
|three and four times a day,
²⁹⁹|as well as what the royal children gave,
|without making a moment's ceas³⁰⁰ing.

A pyramid |of stone was built for me,
in the mi³⁰¹dst |of the pyramids.
The Overseer of pyra<mi>d |builders was taking ³⁰²its foundations;
|the Overseer of sealers was drawing;
the sculptor|s were ³⁰³{were} carving;
the Overseer of the workers who |are in the burial grounds ³⁰⁴busied
himself with it.

All the equipment to be put in a tomb-³⁰⁵shaft –
|its share of these things was made.
I |was given funerary priests;
a funerary garden was ³⁰⁶made for me,
|with fields in it in front at the harbour²
³⁰⁷as is done |for a Chief friend.
My image was over³⁰⁸laid with gold,
|and its kilt with electrum.
It is his Person who has caused this to be done.
³⁰⁹|There is no other vile man{s} for whom the like was done.
I was in ³¹⁰the favour|s of the king's giving,
until the day of landing came.”

³¹¹|SO IT ENDS, FROM START TO FINISH,
AS FOUND IN WRITING.

Manuscript 2 (*The Tale of the Eloquent Peasant* B1)

[There was once a man
called Khunanup.

² Or “in it as formerly to the harbour” (A. M. Blackman 1930: 65); or “as a desmes<ne> in <its> proper place” (Fairman and Grdseloff 1947: 29).