

The Book in Honour of the Emperor

By Peter of Eboli

Extracts

This long poem in praise of the Emperor Henry VI and describing his conquest of the kingdom of Sicily was probably written between 1195 and 1197. A reference towards the end of the poem to the proposed recovery of Jerusalem suggests that this was written during the preparations for Henry's proposed Crusade in 1197, shortly before the emperor's death, but this section may be an addition to the original work. The last event to which reference was otherwise made in the poem was the birth of Henry's son Frederick, which took place on 26th December 1194. The author identifies himself at the end of the work as 'Master Peter of Eboli, faithful servant of the emperor'. He was thus a native of the kingdom of Sicily, from Eboli in the principality of Salerno. Peter was also the author of two other poems, one apparently commemorating the Crusade of Henry's father, the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, which no longer survives, and the other, dedicated to Frederick II, about the medicinal baths of Pozzuoli, near Naples. This last work was probably written c. 1211-12. Peter himself died before July 1220, when Frederick II confirmed a mill at Eboli that had once belonged to him to the archbishopric of Salerno. From his interest in medicine, it has been suggested that Peter himself may also have been a doctor; this is however unproven. For further discussion of the author, see C.M. Kaufmann, The Baths of Pozzuoli. A Study of the Medieval Illuminations of Peter of Eboli's Poem (Oxford 1959).

The poem in praise of Henry has 1675 lines, and (apart from one short section towards the end, which is entirely in hexameters) is written in alternating hexameters and pentameters; the other poem about the Baths of Pozzuoli is composed in hexameters only. Whereas a number of manuscripts survive of the poem on the Baths of Pozzuoli, there is only one of the Liber ad Honorem Augusti, now Bern, Burgerbibliothek, Cod. 120 II. This is a de luxe presentation copy, illuminated with fifty-three full-page colour illustrations of the story told. It may well have been the copy intended for presentation to the emperor himself, certainly the handwriting is

that of the end of the twelfth century. The manuscript seems to have been in France by the late Middle Ages, and to have later been in the library of the French humanist Jacques Bongars (1554-1612). The earliest printed edition dates from 1746. The extracts translated below have been made from Liber ad Honorem Augusti di Pietro da Eboli, ed. G.B. Siragusa (Fonti per la Storia d'Italia, Rome 1906). The most recent edition, Petrus de Ebulo, Liber ad Honorem Augusti sive de Rebus Siculis, Codex 120 II der Burgerbibliothek Bern, ein Bilderchronik der Stauferzeit, edited Theo Kolzer and Marlis Stähli (Sigmaringen 1994), includes excellent full-colour photographs of the original illuminated manuscripts.

The translation below [lines 1-109, 306-604, 773-860, 1363-72] has been a team effort by Graham A. Loud, Ian Moxon and Paul Oldfield.

G.A. Loud, 21/iii/2006

Since this (partial) translation was made, the complete text has been published with an English translation, by Gwennyth Hood, Book in Honor of Augustus (Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, Tempe, Arizona 2012). For further information, see my review of this work, in Speculum 90 (2015), 1157-8. The extracts translated below may still, however, be useful, as another (and entirely) independent version of this text.

I Here Begins the First Verse, about the First King of Sicily

When Duke Roger, the distinguished scion of Guiscard,
 Now disdained to bear the name of duke,
 He aimed higher. Through conferral by Calixtus,¹
 He was anointed as a king. The king made a new kingdom,
 Which the fierce barbarians feared, as did the Nile and all the circle of the ocean.
 This king made many other kingdoms subject to his state,
 He also planned to perpetuate his name.
 The distinguished Elvira brought forth many sons for him:
 But at length the mother died, leaving her children bereft.

¹ Actually Anacletus II (1130-8), but since he was deemed to have been an anti-pope, Calixtus II (1119-24) was deemed more acceptable.

Thereafter Sibilina succeeded to the widower's bed.
 This unfortunate woman ended her days in an unsuccessful childbirth.
 So it was his destiny to marry a third wife,
 Through whom the honour of the Roman world would grow.
 Beatrice was born of distinguished parents.
 She resembled the sun, the light that is going to illuminate the day.
 Virtuous among the virtuous, outstanding among the gentle, chaste among the modest,
 This pretty woman gave birth to a beautiful one, a holy one to a pious one.
 This blessed woman brought forth into the light from her belly a blessed child,
 Taking her name from the name of Constantine.
 Constance was given as wife to the mighty Augustus;
 Lucius was the 'matron of honour' (*pronuba*) of this marriage,
 Lucius joined those whom Celestine anointed:
 The shining one (*lucidus*) united them, that heavenly one (*celicus*) consecrated them.²
 So Henry VI was marked by these two popes.
 The deeds of each of them corresponded with their great names!
 And their worthy names were consonant with their merits!
 One shines (*luceat*) among the saints, the other reigns on high (*celestiat*),
 Henry receives a double gift from them.
 A pontiff with the number three crowned this woman, another with the number three
 Married her, and a third wife bore her for her father,
 Her father was not permitted to marry a fourth wife,
 For such a number would be displeasing to God.³

II **The Death of William II, the Handsome King of Sicily**

After your death, O handsome man, who ruled and governed
 With the sceptre, you lacked children of your own blood.
 Nor did you make an heir, nor did you choose who was to succeed,
 But you paid your debt to the earth intestate.

² Constance was betrothed to Henry VI in October 1184, during the pontificate of Lucius III (1181-5), while Celestine III (1191-8) crowned them as emperor and empress in 1191. However, the actual marriage did not take place until 27th January 1186, after the death of Lucius, and no other source suggests that the pope played any part in the marriage negotiations, which were hardly in the interests of the papacy.

³ Lines 1-34.

Who knew the secrets of your most pure heart?
 What you may have thought in your heart, you kept silent before the world.
 It was indeed certain that the most lawful heir
 Would have to conquer what was the kingdom of her family.
 For it is enough that you once swore that if you were to lack children
 [The line of] your grandfather would hold the sceptre through his son-in-law.
 The Arch-Matthew swore this same thing along with many others.
 After wretched illness and the sad death of the king,
 It rained in the darkness of the night while the sun was hidden.
 After the king, a most beautiful being, abandoned the world,
 Battles, plundering and hunger multiplied themselves,
 Robberies, plague, pestilence, disputes, perjury and slaughter
 Ripped the unhappy kingdom apart.
 The sun of men died, the Heavens suffered an eclipse,
 The moon of England lamented the daylight sun of Sicily.⁴
 The sun moved to the west and darkened the earth,
 The Gods wept, the stars lamented, the sea cried, the earth mourned.⁵

III The Lamentation and Mourning of Palermo

The city that was up to now happy, endowed with people of three languages,
 Is struck in the heart, wavers in its breast, falls in its mind;
 They cry out, with hand, mouth and tears. They give way to tears,
 Young men and boys, old men with the young,
 Rich and poor, slave and free, pious and impious, all
 With equal gravity utter the funeral laments for the king.
 The chaste cry with widows, the married along with virgins,
 How do I delay my tears? There was nothing except for lamentation.
 The one who lies in his crib, the adult who is at the height of his powers,
 And those for whom their cane forms a sort of third leg,
 In every place, in every street, and through the lofty palaces they lament.
 The ninth days dries up the tears.

⁴ William II had been married to Joanna, the youngest daughter of King Henry II of England.

⁵ Lines 35-55.

Then the father bishop spoke these words to all, ⁶
 He was unable to speak more than a few words because of his tears:
 ‘Up to now, when wandering we have found the correct path,
 Up to now, our heart has driven the hungry wolves from the stables;
 Up to now, the sheep have returned to the fold with no one driving them,
 The shepherd’s sheep, heavy with milk in the evening;
 Up to now, no wandering cow has feared the lions’ claws,
 Nor has any bird been afraid of the beaks of eagles;
 Up to now, the solitary traveller has gone rejoicing through the shadows;
 Nor, up to now, has there been any place for ambush;
 Up to now, anybody could see himself in that mirror;
 That death has shattered and the graves of the night [now] hold;
 So far the candles of this wretched kingdom have burned,
 That flame now becomes ash under the dark earth.
 Send out the word that the sister of Phoebus and the wife of Jove
 Should hasten to join both under the strength of her rule’.⁷

IV Divided Opinions among the Populace

After the tears and funeral ceremonies, after the sad interment,
 The seed of schism arose in the capital city,
 A bloodstained hand laid hold of its innards, consuming
 This great city, how great the slaughter was nobody could say.
 After this sacrilege, the city was drenched in blood,
 But after a while this civil strife was stilled
 Everyone sought for himself a king whom he considered a friend;
 Some sought a person greater than themselves, others an equal,
 Some sought a relative, others wanted a close friend;
 One praised a man for his humility, another recommended a strong man;
 Everyone sought one man as their king, then chose another, then sought a third.
 The mind of the Pharisees was not the equal of their vows.

⁶ This was probably Thomas, Archbishop of Reggio 1179-90, the author of a surviving funeral oration for William II.

⁷ Lines 56-83.

One man wanted Tancred, another sought Count Roger;
 What one person wanted, another refused, what he rejected another man wanted.
 Both of these men were leaders of knights, both were Masters of the law.⁸
 The former was small but generous, the latter large but frugal.
 Meanwhile the vice-chancellor burned within
 To persuade the people to unite in seeking Tancred.
 The archbishop opposed this, who was active everywhere,⁹
 The entire court refused to accede to Matthew's wishes.
 But the latter pursued his wicked plans more and more fixedly,
 Taking heed of nothing except what he himself wanted.
 By threat, prayer and promises he dragged the unwilling onto his side,
 Trying every sort of deceit to fill his nets.
 With promises for the humble, prayers for the great, bribes for the fortunate
 He conquered, and the archbishop was ruined by his own straight-forwardness.¹⁰

* * * *

XI An Embassy from the Kingdom

Meanwhile he [the Emperor] received envoys carrying letters,
 That the magnates of the kingdom, its leaders had sent to give him information.
 First the great-hearted Count Roger had written,
 [Even] that wretched count who was only half a man had written.¹¹
 The Count of Conza, with his fatherly appearance, wrote [to him],¹²
 That distinguished Count of Molise also wrote.¹³
 The Count of Tricarico and the Count of Gravina wrote,

⁸ Both Count Tancred of Lecce and Count Roger of Andria had been Master Justiciars of Apulia and Terra di Lavoro, that is royal governors on the mainland, and in overall charge of the judicial system there.

⁹ *gualterizatur ubique*: there is a word play on 'Walter / Gualterio', the Archbishop of Palermo's name. Walter was archbishop 1169-90, formerly Dean of Agrigento and tutor of the young king, William II. He was one of the chief ministers of the crown throughout this period. He died late in 1190.

¹⁰ Lines 84-109.

¹¹ Tancred. Whether this suggests that Tancred had tried negotiating with Henry after his own coronation as king, or whether this refers to some communication earlier, is unclear.

¹² Richard, Count of Carinola and Conza (d. 1196/7).

¹³ Count Roger of Molise. Both he and Count Richard initially supported Henry, but then went over to Tancred's side in 1191/2.

So too did Philip with his three sons. ¹⁴
 And the great twin-brothers the Lupini wrote, ¹⁵
 Similarly the archbishop of Capua wrote. ¹⁶
 The archbishop wrote, the jewel under the lords of Palermo,
 Bishop Bartholomew likewise wrote. ¹⁷
 The pious archdeacon of Salerno wrote, along with many others,
 Whose pure loyalty remained even purer in the fire.

XII The First Entry of the Emperor into the Kingdom of Sicily

See, the bravest hero of the world sets his empire in motion,
 And comes as leader of a noble army.
 He will not suffer his kingdom to be rent by a false prince,
 When it is rightfully his through inheritance from his forefathers.
 Thus in the past her [?] grandfather and great-grandfather gave the tributes
 Which his own father took from the Sicilian kings.
 If you wish to list those born from great Caesar,
 Your Charles thunders in the midst of the circle.
 Nor is Frederick lesser, who received from him
 His family, sceptre, name and very existence. ¹⁸
 All that you see he forced to serve him,
 In doing this, he overtopped with stronger lance your Charles.
 However much praise and triumph he has from the world,
 His reputation claims this to be the least among his titles'
 However, reckoning the world to be as little for his powers,
 He wished to place a greater hope in the Lord.
 Like another Moses, he and his people a second Egypt
 Abandoned, so that he might redeem the kingdoms and the house of God.

¹⁴ Perhaps Philip Guarna, subsequently, in 1195, appointed Count of Marsico by Henry, replacing a supporter of Tancred.

¹⁵ Hugh Lupinus, Count of Catanzaro, and his brother Jordan, whom Tancred made Count of Bovino. Both remained loyal to Tancred.

¹⁶ Matthew, Archbishop of Capua, 1183-99, was one of the most important, and loyal, supporters of Henry and Constance within the kingdom, and played an important part in its government after 1194.

¹⁷ Bartholomew, Bishop of Agrigento 1171-91, succeeded his brother Walter as Archbishop of Palermo 1191-9, royal *familiaris* 1171-6 and 1183-9.

¹⁸ Frederick I Barbarossa, Emperor of Germany 1152-90, and father of Henry VI.

Now seeing his vows among his joys, he has travelled
 To Christ, and fights, dressed in white, on everlasting horses.¹⁹
 With fullness of power, his appearance scorns victories,
 It is enough to see his own [image] from every side.
 From this and other matters, you will recognise the true heir,
 For your glory is greater than that of Pepin.
 Imitate your imperial predecessors, defend your right,
 And protect the rights of the mighty father of your wife.
 One frontier marks off what belongs both to you and your father-in-law,
 For the right of your consort is subsumed into your rights.²⁰

XIII The High Walls of Castles are Cast Down

Striking camp, Caesar enters the territory of Montecassino,
 In which was Roffred, faithful to his duty.
 He, along with his flock and people, behaved as an abbot should:
 His loyalty alone restrained the arms of Caesar.

[How Rocca d'Arce was stormed]

This celebrated fortress was by force made subject to the empire,
 Where Burellus had been made governor by the wretched king.
 Its example was followed by many other fortresses,
 For the name *Archis* means the first and so it proved.
 Nature had set this on a steep hill,
 It did not receive its enemies, nor fear rocks nor arms.

[How the archbishop of Capua welcomed the emperor with rejoicing]

O Capuan father, they make no delay in meeting you;
 The horses' flanks fear the rowels of the spur.
 You were awaiting him with sighs, your prayers sought him,

¹⁹ Frederick Barbarossa died on the Third Crusade in June 1190.

²⁰ Lines 306-333.

Here comes the lord, whom your prayers seek!
 Hand out the victorious eagle standards to the people,
 Decorate the walls, so that the fury of the sword need not be feared.
 Your people, most holy prelate, should disregard their faith ²¹
 And sustain their anxious hearts with the treasure of safety. ²²

XIV The Besieged City of Naples Holds Out

As the sea suddenly foams forth, as the air become cloudy
 As a flock of doves suddenly besieges an oak tree,
 So Caesar darkens you borders, O Parthenopian city, ²³
 And unless you fight back with your wealth, you will be defeated.
 Caesar orders that tents be pitched along the right-hand side,
 He rides around the walls, [sitting] high on his speedy horse.
 Joyfully he inspects the city, which is strongly-fortified
 With walls and ramparts, turrets and men.
 Siege engines are built to flatten the lofty walls
 He places heavy stones on the long arms [of these machines]. ²⁴
 The men from Cologne fought on one side, the Bohemians on the other,
 Here the Duke of Spoleto approached the walls on horseback ²⁵
 On the other side a crowd of men well-furnished with quivers
 Fight, and elsewhere the many lances of the cavalry glitter.
 Here he sees a man on the wall with his bow bent at the ready
 Silent, eager to see war;
 There he restrains another infantryman, yelling many threats and insults
 Correcting his threats, as he is speaking them.
 There was one man among our enemies who was hurling stones,
 And shouting insults; he gave tongue to these words:

²¹ This appears to mean that the people of Capua should disregard any oath of loyalty that they may previously have sworn to Tancred.

²² Lines 334-351.

²³ In Ancient legend, the siren Parthenope was alleged to have been buried in Naples.

²⁴ Medieval siege engines were catapults, operated by torsion or weights, usually composed of a single long beam, pivoted on a frame, with the trailing end, holding the stone to be hurled, being longer than the other end, attached to the twisted rope or counter-weight that propelled the beam.

²⁵ Conrad von Urslingen, Duke of Spoleto (d. 1202).

‘You soon won’t have any hair or any Caesar,²⁶
 There will be hardly one cheerful man in all your thousands.
 If our Augustus can do anything, he will like a lion
 Shear your Augustus and his sheep.’
 One of our infantrymen shot a bolt from his crossbow,
 And striking him sent him tumbling down from the high wall.²⁷

XV The Count is Wounded and the Petition of Salerno receives a Favourable Hearing

Since the distinguished count, the glory and hope of Tancred,²⁸
 Wishes to see the camp of the unconquered Caesar,
 He surrounds himself with chosen men, climbs the walls [of the city] in arms,
 And makes a mockery of men whose skill lay in the bow.
 Someone catches sight of him, and draws his Lycaian bow back to his ears,
 The arrow flashed as it shot through the middle of his cheek.
 As the crashing sound of an ancient oak fills the forest and the air,
 When it collapses after being uprooted, or is struck down by a swift whirlwind,
 So from your fall, O count, those of every age cry out,
 And that king of yours, already short, becomes even shorter.
 But the wretched bishop²⁹ girds himself with the count’s sword,
 Having forgotten religious scruples, he pollutes his hands.
 Some men, as they drift in the safety of a boat, draw their crescent-shaped bows,
 The Bohemians follow them into the sea, their horses swimming,
 Meanwhile the messenger of this magnificent city makes his plea,
 Describing the chests of the young men,³⁰ the prayers of the old,
 The hearts of the girls, the minds and joys of the mothers,
 And whatever wishes the minds of children contain.
 The *archoticon*³¹ speaks as follows: ‘Let your noble wife, come,

²⁶ *sine cesarie vel iam sine Cesare*, apart from the word play, there may be a more subtle joke here since Julius Caesar was notoriously sensitive about his thinning hair.

²⁷ Lines 352-377.

²⁸ Count Richard of Acerra, Tancred’s brother-in-law and the commander of his army on the mainland.

²⁹ Nicholas, Archbishop of Salerno 1182-1222, the son of the chancellor Matthew.

³⁰ Chests, *pectora*, in the sense of ‘physical beauty’, and also perhaps of ‘courage’.

³¹ A classicising word for a leading official.

An sit raised on high in the city of her father,
 May you wage here savage wars victoriously; may your wife rejoice,
 In Salerno, and may she preserve in the city its wavering loyalty.
 For if wars are pleasing, battles are not lacking at all:
 Behold the Torre Maggiore sets in motion daily (?) wars:
 Nearby, not far away, is the weak *castrum* of Giffone,
 In which the weapons of the cautious soldier is hidden.
 Nearby is the sweet ground, always quite useful to us,
 [Namely] Eboli, aiming at what the honour of the city seeks,
 Nearby is the *castrum* of Campania, or rather the cave of robbers,
 Which often insidiously burdens the ground of Eboli.’
 When his envoy reports back these things before the leader of the world,
 The generous leader says: ‘What you ask for will be [granted]’.
 Immediately the energetic kindly father of the city of Capua,
 Receives the following orders from his master:
 ‘Go indeed, good father, for my greatest wish.
 Is always to put into effect what my wife wishes’.
 When the envoy announces at Salerno that these requests have been granted,
 Universal joy brings to an end this solemn day;
 A proclamation has gone forth that tomorrow there will be a [new] mistress,
 For whose arrival everybody makes himself ready in his own interest.³²

XVI The Entry of the Empress into the City

When the following day’s sun has chased away the starry shadows,
 The city rushes forth and showers its lady with jubilation.
 Some, who enjoy the flower of youth and beauty ride out
 On Sicilian horses, others are seated, conveyed by wheels.
 That crowd of girls, dressed up with bonnets and decorated with gold,
 Proud in their finery, runs out [to meet her].
 Their gentle and unaccustomed step scorns the sand,
 The sandy shore and the waves tire out their feet.

³² Lines 378-417.

Cinnamon, incense aloe, frankincense, rose, lilies, myrtle,
 Stimulate their nostrils, the scent changes the air;
 Such a strong scent of incense, as it blows, overwhelms them,
 Because each woman carries new perfumes to be poured out.
 Who in the city is slow to look upon Juno?
 No one fails to join in hymns to the praise of Caesar.
 As birds sing when the leaves have been reborn in spring,
 After the winter nights, after the heavy period of rain,
 Their spring-like mouths express nothing except praise for she who is coming,
 They all give voice together: 'Behold, the day of light'.
 At last Constance enters her father's ancestral seat,
 However, she perceives the loyalty to Tancred in the city.
 How many people, in groups, whisper quietly,
 [And] talk to each other of the changed prospects of the leading man;
 The mountain flees from the *castra* as [quickly] as a shot arrow flies,³³
 And as [quickly] as a sling can fire stones;
 They climb up to it and build a siege engine; they start to fight,
 One against the other. This civil war has various outcomes;
 From one side dire weapons fly, from the other the sling casts pebbles from the river,
 And the rocks that are thrown tire out their hands.
 And next making efforts they fight in disorder near the walls,
 And in fighting mingle weapons and hands [and] sounds.
 As a dog rages among boars, from among which it chooses one,
 As a hawk seizes the one it chooses among the sheep,
 Just so do our men pluck out one of their enemies;
 [Indeed] because ranks are mixed together, they frequently seize two.³⁴

XVII The Despatch of Ambassadors and the Sickness of the Prince

Meanwhile the envoy of the prince [Henry VI] coming into the city,
 Chooses men from the many distinguished people,

³³ What Peter appears to be saying, is that the partisans of Tancred took refuge in the citadel, on the hill above the city.

³⁴ Lines 418-51.

And he sends them to Naples. They, greatly fearful,
 Hasten on their laborious journey, in uncertain frame of mind.³⁵
 Among them was Alfanides surnamed Princeps,
 Aldrisius, in the ordinary language of his people,
 And Romuald, the scales of justice; the rest of the crowd,
 Assume what they want, not knowing what the reason for the journey.
 When they come to the prince's camp, they wander around,
 Wondering at the marching troops and equipment of the leaders.
 They request permission to see their Thunderer³⁶ in the camp,
 But access is denied to where the great leader was.
 However, there enters the man whom the people call Archos;
 Although his companions have been shut out, one man approaches the person whom
 he seeks.
 When he sees Augustus racked by mighty fevers,
 And that his limbs lie limp upon the purple bed,
 Then the colour and the beauty, and the blood left his face;
 Sad and pale, he falls before the bed.
 As a mother wakes from a dream, to find the child
 Lifeless at her breast, is terrified and bereft of her wits,
 So the archdeacon³⁷ weeps and breaks out into groaning,
 Knowing that he would be willing to die in place of this great prince.
 Then the good Augustus, although he was sickly in body,
 Tries to speak with a weak voice, as follows:
 'Spare your eyes, most loyal carer from Salerno,
 I am well, have no fear, the tertian fever is past.
 Put your hand under my shirt, measure my steady pulse,
 There is hope for my life, because my limbs are wet'.³⁸
 Although he wanted to say many other things, sleep stole over his eyes,
 On the one hand it seizes his eyes, on the other it stops him from speaking.
 Girardus, who upholds the teachings of the Hippocratic art,

³⁵ They are afraid that they are being taken as hostages for the good behaviour of the city.

³⁶ Henry VI; this continues the image of Henry as Jupiter, often called 'the Thunderer'.

³⁷ *archelevita*: which could translate 'archpriest', but identified as 'the archdeacon' in the illustration on fol. 112^r of the MS.

³⁸ Thus he is sweating out the fever.

Carefully instructs the servants to be quiet.
 Diligently he supports the kindly work of nature,
 For sleep and sweat were the indications of recovery.
 Eventually the good archdeacon went out to his companions,
 Their tears are trying to speak no less than their mouths.
 One cast glances towards the eyes of the other,
 As they mingled tears, they [also] spoke to each other.³⁹

XVIII A Prohibition on Departure

The Count of Acerra, fortified by companions and gold,
 Gives instructions that no one is to leave the city.
 He speaks as follows: ‘The nightingale, as it hides in the thick bushes,
 Gentle [though it is], is not afraid of being seized by an enemy’s claw.
 Who indeed will have dared to strive in war against the lord of the world,
 Or who will go meet him in fair fight?
 If it pleases you, O citizens, let us enjoy a better state of mind:
 Let gold fight and bear arms on our behalf.’ (Nicholas adds)
 If you are wise, citizens, let the Count depart, let our cause stand firm in arms;
 To have fallen for the sake of one’s own lord deserves praise.
 Spare those who deserve to be spared, spare your chosen men.
 Let everyone be aware of his own strength, according to his fears.
 Perhaps the tree at which you looking lacks inner strength;
 No reliability breathes beneath its hollow bark.
 The higher the tree, the more liable it is to fall,
 As the wind rages against it, God himself thunders.’
 What is Nicholas doing, a man with the name of bishop acting as a child?
 What is he doing apart from washing his woman’s cheeks?
 You flocks of sheep, entrust yourselves to another shepherd:
 So badly does he look after his own flock!
 What are you doing, O Caesar? Why do you attempt [to breach] the walls in vain?
 The gifts of the king are casting a cloud over your allies,

³⁹ Lines 452-489.

Who are deceitfully asking to go away; don't allow a sick man
To rise up with his limbs refreshed, which will render the expedition difficult.⁴⁰

XIX The Emperor Abandons the Siege

When Caesar sees that his generals are awash with bronze and that his men
Are belching forth gold, his mind prompts him to speak the following words:
'You, who have now for a long time dried out our rivers of gold from Spain,
Are [now] submerging your entire head in the springs of Sicily;
The sea still remains, although you cannot drink it,
Neither the sea nor the bottomless depths contains enough to sate you'.
As soon as Caesar realises the deceit of his men,
He is forced by a tertian fever to abandon his expedition.
O what suffering and fear that day brought upon everyone,
As it stirred up their minds!
As fear drives together sheep which have been abandoned by the shepherd,
Which his dog alone has kept safe from the mouth of the wolf,
So too those whom the pious grace of the empire cherishes;
This man weeps, and that one grieves; fear reigns everywhere.
What spirit was left to you, what was in your mind, archdeacon,
When you suppose that you can see Jupiter doing what is forbidden,
And yet you observe that suddenly tents are being torn down?
It was night and there was no noise in the camp.
You see the ropes being set on fire, the bones of the tortoise being burned,⁴¹
And that all the help of Pallas is being undone.
As a breeze shakes the new ears of grain of the harvest that is to be cut,
As rough Aeolus⁴² moves the waters of the sea,
In such a way, the self-same way, does Alfanides, heir to his father's surname,
Tremble both without hope of return and without sense.
Then grief and tears tire out their faces with sobbing,

⁴⁰ Lines 490-513. The last two lines seem to refer to Tancred's cause, which is being refreshed by the check to the imperial army at Naples.

⁴¹ A 'tortoise' (*testudo*) was a portable shelter used to protect the besiegers from missiles thrown from the walls of a besieged city or castle.

⁴² The God of the winds.

Then the entire mind of the Socratic heart grows dull.

Worried men do not know what to do. Are you afraid to report any answers?

It is hard work to be in camp in Italy.

Those who have not been conquered by a mother's love, nor by the present glory
Of [earthly] things, nor the family feeling of brothers, or the difficulty of the
expedition;

These follow the empire and undergo toil high-mindedly.

But the followers of Tancred are returning, they are filling the city with rumours.⁴³

They are bringing false information about the great prince:

One declares, 'he is dead', another says 'He is dead'; yet another declares 'He is
warm' [alive] and another claims 'He is getting cold' [dying];

Credence varies, since what is said is so unreliable.⁴⁴

XX The Sworn Duty of Keeping Faith is Forgotten

As the harsh buzzing of bees sounds angrily in a smoky cave,

So a fresh rumour is heard in the city, that it is about to be plundered.

Here three people, there seven, elsewhere twelve, over there four people,

Gather to discuss the situation in hushed tones.

The savage people of Salerno, incited by bad advice,

Made good an error with a worse one and an act of cunning with outright deceit.

They think to show their obedience to the king through perjury;

They are keen to persuade Tancred to treat them gently.

But when they surround the vast royal palace,

Which people say has the name 'Terracina',

They shout out: 'What are you doing, Constance? Are you weighing your wool?

Are you drawing out your threads? What are you doing? Or are you winding up the
wool that has been given [to you]?

Caesar has gone. You can be sure, you wretched woman, that he has deceived us as
well as you.

Tell us where is that Caesar, whom you loved so much?

⁴³ The scene returns from the emperor's camp at Naples to Salerno.

⁴⁴ Lines 514-548.

Tell [us] where is he, of whom you used to boast so often with optimistic words
 That he was powerful and warlike – this man who lies without a wife?
 O happy Naples, who alone did not receive you!
 Because our city has seen you, it will crash down in ruins on your account.
 Your husband sent you away. He acted not as your husband but as an Apostle:
 You will be our hostage and our sweet booty'.
 Against the lady they throw the darts and rocks of a tongue
 Full of anger, combined with numerous threats.
 Whatever the sling, the crossbow and the bow are capable of,
 [All] go to work with vigour against the lady.
 As a crow shrieks whenever an eagle has been seen,
 Which the chattering [bird] believes [is] the bird that flies at night,
 [As] the bird rages with its claws and beak and beats the air with its wings,
 And like a blacksmith turns on blasts of air,
 [As] one pecks, another hops, and in hopping follows the one who falls,
 [As] the rumour works its changes, when the bronze has been beaten,
 So the people that is about to be rendered subservient rages against its mighty mistress;
 The crop that is to be burned turns into miserable darnel. ⁴⁵

XXI The Words of the Empress to the People in Revolt

To this the German responds with words and weapons:
 A guest in a strange country ⁴⁶ fights faithfully.
 She however was constant, as she is Constance by name,
 And since she was the wife of the celebrated Caesar,
 She bravely addressed the enemy from an open window.
 So she said: 'Listen to what my words imply.
 At least while we speak, keep your hands and weapons still.
 I won't say much, but consider my words carefully.
 O people of great loyalty, at the height of proven reason,
 You know who I am, and who I was, and thus I ask [you];

⁴⁵ Lines 549-580.

⁴⁶ Siragusa, *Liber*, 47, suggests that here *orbe* was a scribal error for *urbe* ('in a city'): Kölzer & Stähli, 117, prefer to retain *orbe*.

Caesar has gone away or died, or so you say, hence,
 If it be pleasing, I too shall be an exile, from your land to that of Caesar.
 Recall your loyalty to mind, restrain your anger,
 Don't let letters, words or noise seduce you,
 Nor however many times the thunder of Heaven reverberates in the clouds,
 Or however many times God sends a fiery lightening bolt.
 If the archbishop has written [this], he writes, I think, inaccurately.
 He cares for his native land through a work of artifice and deceit.
 He betrays in his face every sort of wickedness and evil;
 What the mouths of the father spew forth, the son also drinks up.⁴⁷
 Do you believe a pastor who has fled, who was born of a Hydra
 That like a snake never changes its essential nature?
 It is therefore virtue when you resist his words
 And to maintain your fealty abandon your limbs to death.'⁴⁸

* * * *

XXVII Under Siege, Conrad Speaks to his Men⁴⁹

Ancient city, most rich in its own field,⁵⁰
 Mother of resources, fortunate in its bishop, full of men,
 A land that flourishes with fruitfulness, and in autumn is prolific,
 Its poplar tree, which loves its river, is wedded to the vine,
 The same [poplar] embraces ordered elms,
 The inhabitant is proud that the grape pours forth the unmixed wine,
 The land having been thrice sewn, it is sewn three times, gives three answers to the
 farmer,
 Three times under a new sun does the land weigh out its seeds.
 The count confines with a siege the city of which we speak,
 A city that can only be captured through treachery.

⁴⁷ Archbishop Nicholas of Salerno was the son of the chancellor Matthew, Tancred's leading supporter.

⁴⁸ Lines 581-604.

⁴⁹ Conrad von Lützelhard, later appointed Count of Molise by Henry in 1195.

⁵⁰ The city is Capua, that had earlier surrendered to the imperial army, and is clearly identified as such in the pictures on the accompanying pages.

When Conrad gets tired of defending it by force,
 He is said to have advised his men with the following words:
 ‘Chieftains, you who have come with me from a cold clime,
 See what that people, what that place wishes,
 Neither the place nor the people have any faith in our goodwill,
 You see that their hands are bearing spears against us,
 Every man fights to protect his own head with bared sword,
 And that people sets no store by prayer or bribe,
 To die in battle is freedom: it is evil to be slave,
 For us life is to die, living is given as a penalty.
 Augustus isn’t here and Augusta has been captured.
 What remains for us? Safety remains in the sword.
 There is no hope of flight, because an enemy besieges us outside,
 An enemy is [also] within, for no house is without an enemy.
 Like a wild boar that is surrounded by dogs, raging
 With his curved tusk, having taken his vengeance on many, falls at the hands of the
 enemy,
 So not one of you, if he should fall, would be unavenged;
 It would be to the victor’s advantage to have pity for the conquered one’.
 Next he speaks a few words to the citizens,
 ‘Do not dishonour your good faith with your guests, I beg you.
 Keep your faith with Augustus. If by chance, and may this not happen,
 You want to honour your Tancred,
 We beg that we are allowed to go away from here in safety.
 We have not come here from a distant part of the world to die.
 Even if our Augustus is absent on the other side of the world,
 You know he has endless forces’.
 Thus far, with pricked up ears he [Conrad] hears the tumult,
 And is amazed, and remembers that he, a man, [still] survives,
 As when swarms wish to protect the honey that has been gathered,
 They fly about indiscriminately and rage about having been disturbed,
 So almost the whole city becomes is roused to riot against the Germans,
 And names its king with its dirty mouth,
 Crying out that it acknowledged as king none other than Tancred,

In its folly it preferred a monster so short, rather than a Jupiter. ⁵¹

Meanwhile the Count, before the gates, takes the first move in war, ⁵²

He knows there are many Sinones in the city, ⁵³

Behold, suddenly the doors have been opened, the bolt of the door has been broken,

The unspeakable horror of civil war occurs, criminal behaviour by its inhabitants,

The foreigner falls at the hands of unknown foe, the guest falls at the hand of false

host,

One man pierces someone's side with his sword, another cuts off a head,

Hauberk presses against hauberk, sword rages against sword,

Shield against shield, helmet crashes on bronze,

Helmet to helmet, sword to sword emit smoke,

Weapons give forth flames and when cast cause a flash,

One man penetrates the skull of his dear host with his weapon,

Another man is wild, another is savage; one man strikes, another strikes back,

This man leaps, that man leaps, that man holds fast, and is held fast by another,

This man is nimble, that man swift and both are suited to flight,

One man vies to toss his head into the dangers and another risks his head [as well],

One man presents his side to the weapons, and [then] another,

These people vie with their shields at equal distance, ⁵⁴

As the ram often plays with his companion.

A man crashes down from the walls and drags his enemy headlong,

The victor falls to the man he has conquered and the defeated falls at the hand of his enemy,

As the arms-bearer of Jupiter is accustomed to be bound by the snake which it has seized, ⁵⁵

One man binds, another holds, and both are bound and perish,

Not otherwise are those who wage war on lofty city walls,

When two men grapple, each causes the other's death.

⁵¹ Lines 773-816.

⁵² Richard of Acerra.

⁵³ The *Sinones* come from Vergil's *Aeneid*.

⁵⁴ Cf. Vergil, *Aeneid*, II.724.

⁵⁵ Vergil, *Aeneid*, IX.564.

One of then binding the arms of the other behind,
 If one of them falls, they both crash down, both one and the other dies.
 Now let my Calliope ⁵⁶ sing of what has never been heard [before],
 Let her sing of what is remarkable in the telling.
 While the Count was going on horseback to inspect all around the walls,
 And had come to where the highest tower was,
 A German man caught sight of him from the top of the citadel,
 This unfortunate man slipped down to the ground and threw himself against the
 Count,
 And had not the fates snatched the man ⁵⁷ away from the fury of the one rushing upon
 him,
 Then the Count would have borne a grievous burden that had slipped down upon him,
 As the light upper air flashes amidst the rain-bearing clouds,
 When the wind ploughs its clouds into furrows,
 Similarly from afar the weapon flashes in the rays of the sun,
 And every head that is not crested flashes,
 After the deaths of [his] leading men, Conrad lays claim to his life and weapons,
 And [those of] his companions whom he sees to be surviving. ⁵⁸
 The Count and his companions give them security by his right hand and mouth,
 So many noblemen were not able to captured without some deaths,
 The wagon works hard so that the ground does not unbind by means of gore,
 All the dead bodies are submerged in the flowing waters. ⁵⁹

* * * *

XLIII The Birth of Frederick

From Italy came the palm of a triumphal new birth
 Having the distinction of a fortunate father
 He was brought to life through screams [heard] by those present
 The palm tree brought forth its fruit, although delayed.

⁵⁶ Καλλιόπη, literally ‘the beautiful-voiced’: the muse of epic poetry

⁵⁷ The count.

⁵⁸ In other words, Conrad negotiates a surrender, allowing his men to march away under safe-conduct, and keeping at least their personal arms.

⁵⁹ The bodies of the fallen are dumped in the River Volturno. Lines 817-860.

The later the fruit, so much more constant the tree
Finally giving birth like the fruitful olive.⁶⁰
A son is born to Augustus, a boy who will excel at arms,
Though the father is fortunate, the son will be more so,
This boy will in every way be blessed.

[lines 1363-72]

⁶⁰ Constance was forty when Frederick was born, after more than eight years of marriage. There is, of course, a word play between 'more constant', *constantior* and her name.