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Kings and tyrants: Leonardo Bruni's translation of Xenophon's Hiero

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Within a few years of beginning Greek under Manuel Chrysoloras, Leonardo Bruni produced his first two Latin translations of Greek authors. Starting with a translation of St Basil's *Letter to the Youth*, Bruni soon finished his Latin version of Xenophon's *Hiero*. Both works survive in hundreds of manuscripts. However, their enormous popularity in the Quattrocento contrasts with the small amount of scholarship on them in modern historiography. Surprisingly, no study places Bruni's translation of Xenophon's *Hiero* in the context of his early original writings. This absence is striking because scholars have frequently focused on the political ideas in Bruni's early writings, particularly his *Panegyric to the City of Florence* and the *Dialogues*, and the *Hiero* is explicitly a political treatise that Bruni translated early in his career. This absence is even more striking because the *Hiero* advocates benign kingship, an advocacy which seems at odds with the ostensibly republican overtones in Bruni's early works. This essay argues that Bruni's translation of the *Hiero* fits into a broader debate between Coluccio Salutati and Bruni about tyrannical rule and vernacular culture. The *Hiero* proposed a dichotomy between legal kings and illegal tyrants – rather than republics and tyrants – that both men accepted and expressed in works from the early fifteenth century. However, the two men diverged in their arguments about which title best applied to Julius Caesar and what this meant for the reputation of the Florentine poet Dante.

Bruni dedicated his first translation, St Basil's *Letter to the Youth*, to his mentor Coluccio Salutati. Bruni chose this work to help Salutati defend his promotion of teaching youths Latin and Greek classics against critics who argued that reading pagan authors was detrimental for young minds. Bruni's translation of St Basil provided evidence to Salutati that studying authors like Cicero and learning to read Greek were in fact beneficial. Moreover, the authority of a church father like St Basil added weight to Salutati's arguments. Salutati put his new evidence to use. After the Camaldulensian monk Giovanni da Sanminiato expressed a negative view of teaching the pagan classics,

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Salutati wrote, 'I wish you to read Bruni's translation of St Basil's dialogue . . . then you will change your mind.'¹

The reasoning behind Bruni's translation of Xenophon's *Hiero*, which he finished shortly after St Basil's *Letter*, is far more complex and less understood.² Bruni's admiration for Cicero and the teaching methods of Manuel Chrysoloras turned him towards the works of Xenophon. As Paul Botley has noted, Cicero had translated Xenophon as a youth and thus Bruni may have seen himself as imitating the Roman orator and political leader by choosing that author.³ Chrysoloras' selection of authors to teach to his students seems to have included Xenophon, although Chrysoloras' focus was on other authors like Plato and Demosthenes.⁴ Roberto Weiss suggested that the availability of a manuscript with the *Hiero* in it played a role in Bruni's selection.⁵ Luzi Schucan argued that the *Hiero* complemented Bruni's translation of St Basil's *Letter to the Youth*. According to Schucan, the *Hiero* pertained to politics and the *Letter* addressed literary matters, which were Bruni's two life-long interests.⁶

Bruni's preface suggests that he viewed his introduction of Xenophon, rather than the *Hiero* itself, to Niccolò Niccoli and his learned circle as the most critical aspect of the translation. Bruni's translation of the *Hiero* made a work by Xenophon available in Italy in an accessible language for the first time since antiquity.⁷ Yet, the preface makes only two brief references to the actual work translated, instead focusing on a short biography of Xenophon and praise for him. Bruni began the preface with a reference to the work. He wrote that he translated this 'little book' for 'practice'.⁸ He stated that discussions with Niccoli had led him to believe that Niccoli would ' . . . embrace Xenophon with a certain special love'.⁹ Only at the end of the preface did Bruni make another reference to the actual work under consideration. In fact, the

¹ Gordon Griffiths, James Hankins, and David Thompson, *The Humanism of Leonardo Bruni, Selected Texts* (Binghamton, NY: The Renaissance Society of America, 1987), 24.

² James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance* (Leiden, 1990), 2:377.

³ Paul Botley, *Latin Translation in the Renaissance: The Theory and Practice of Leonardo Bruni, Giannozzo Manetti and Desiderius Erasmus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 9.

⁴ James Hankins, 'Manuel Chrysoloras and the Greek Studies of Leonardo Bruni', in *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, *Storia e Letteratura* 215 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003), 1:247. Eventually Xenophon would become a standard author for Greek instruction. See David Marsh, 'Xenophon', in Virginia Brown (ed.), *Catalogus translationum et commentariorum: Mediaeval and Renaissance Latin Translations and Commentaries, Annotated Lists and Guides* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University Press, 1992), 7:80.

⁵ Roberto Weiss, 'Gli Inizi dello Studio del Greco a Firenze', in Carlo Dionisotti, Conor Fahy, and Hohn D. Moores (eds.), *Medieval and Humanist Greek: Collected Essays by Robert Weiss* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1977), 252.

⁶ Luzi Schucan, *Das Nachleben von Basilius Magnus «ad adolescentem»* (Geneva: Librarie, 1973), 78–79.

⁷ Marsh, 'Xenophon', 80.

⁸ Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Humanistisch-Philosophische Schriften mit einer Chronologie seiner Werke und Briefe*, ed. Hans Baron (Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1928), 100. ' . . . quemdam libellum, quem ego ingenii exercendi gratia . . . ' Translations from Bruni's preface are my own. Throughout this article I have translated passages for which no published translation is available. I have provided the original language for all of my translations. In all other cases, for the sake of space, I quote published translations and refer the reader to an edition and page number of the original text.

⁹ *Ibid.* ' . . . praecipuo quodam amore Xenophontem amplecteris.'

preface concluded by actually contrasting the small significance of the *Hiero* with the other more important works of Xenophon. Bruni wrote that he had worked particularly hard on the translation so that it would be pleasing to Niccoli and so that he could practice Greek. ‘However’, he wrote, ‘we did not dare in any way to touch the greater works of that man, which are many and most beautiful, in these first fruits of our studies.’¹⁰

Bruni certainly had some familiarity with a least one longer work by Xenophon. The biographical information on Xenophon in his preface suggests that he knew the basic contents of the much longer *Anabasis*.¹¹ Berthold Ullman speculated that Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, an older contemporary of Bruni, had translated a few lines of the *Anabasis* for Coluccio Salutati.¹² However, Ullman did not present hard evidence for his claim. Instead, he based his hypothesis on the fact that Salutati quoted the *Anabasis* in the same passage as he cited passages from Ptolemy’s *Geography*. Since Scarperia had provided Salutati with the *Geography*, Ullman suggested that Scarperia may also have provided him with the lines from the *Anabasis*.¹³ However, it seems equally plausible that Bruni provided these lines to Salutati and subsequently used the *Anabasis* in his preface to the *Hiero*. If this hypothesis is correct then Bruni’s reference to the ‘greater works’ of Xenophon may be a direct reference to the *Anabasis* and an implied justification for his choice to translate the *Hiero* rather than this longer work. Thus, the influences of Cicero and Chrysoloras, the work’s authorship by Xenophon, and the availability and brevity of the work all contributed to Bruni’s selection of the *Hiero* as his second Greek to Latin translation. Yet, these explanations only tell half of the story. Salutati had put the ideas contained in Bruni’s translation of St Basil’s *Letter* to use in a pedagogical debate then raging in Florence. The ideas in the *Hiero* fit into another intellectual controversy in Florence at the turn of the fifteenth century. In this case, the debate revolved around kings, tyrants, and vernacular culture.

Historians have published an enormous amount of material about the political ideas in Bruni’s early writings without recognizing the importance of his translation of the *Hiero* in this context. Hans Baron’s *Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* made two of Bruni’s earliest original works, his *Panegyric to the City of Florence* (1403/04) and his *Dialogues* (1403–1406), famous among historians of the Italian Renaissance.¹⁴ Baron used these texts to classify Bruni as a civic humanist, for Baron meaning a person who used classical learning to promote Florentine patriotism and republicanism. In Baron’s interpretation,

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 101. ‘Maiora autem illius viri opera, quam permulta sunt ac pulcherrima, in his primitiis studiorum nostrorum nullo modo ausi sumus attingere.’

¹¹ Botley, *Latin Translation*, 9–10.

¹² B. L. Ullman, *The Humanism of Coluccio Salutati* (Padua: Editrice Antenore, 1963), 255.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ My dating follows that of Hankins, *Plato*, 377–8 and Laurence Bernard-Pradelle in Leonardo Bruni Aretino, *Histoire, Éloquence et Poésie à Florence au Début du Quattrocento*, trans. and ed. Laurence Bernard-Pradelle (Paris: Honoré Champion Éditeur, 2008), 195 and 309.

the first book of Bruni's *Dialogues* demonstrated the apolitical, largely contemplative focus of humanism before the crisis year of 1402. In that year, Florence was saved from almost certain conquest by the unexpected death of the Duke of Milan, Giangaleazzo Visconti. After 1402, Bruni added a second book to his first *Dialogue* to refute his own earlier treatise. This new second book revealed the changed focus of humanism after the crisis year. According to Baron, this second book and the contemporaneous *Panegyric* both highlighted Bruni's newfound Florentine patriotism, preference for the active over the contemplative life, and sincere republicanism.¹⁵

Scholars have heavily criticized Baron's thesis. Jerold Seigel and more recently James Hankins have argued that Bruni was a rhetorician employed by the Florentine state. Bruni's actual opinions, thus, may have differed from the arguments in his literary works.¹⁶ David Quint demonstrated that Bruni's arguments in the first and second dialogues are consistent, rather than showcasing the sharp change that Baron had claimed.¹⁷ Stefano Baldassarri studied the manuscript tradition of the *Dialogues* and also concluded that Bruni planned and wrote both dialogues as a single work.¹⁸ Gene Brucker tested Baron's contention that the Florentines perceived 1402 as a year of crisis against archival sources. He concluded that this mood of crisis simply did not exist in the beginning years of the Quattrocento.¹⁹ The most recent scholarship continues to use the concept of civic humanism, but has dropped sincere republicanism as one of its defining characteristics. In fact, James Hankins, in agreement with Ronald Witt, has argued that Bruni's writings suggest that he accepted the potential for just monarchical rule. Hankins argued that Bruni accepted the Aristotelian view that good government rested on the quality of rule, not the form of government. Hankins focused his argument on an analysis of Bruni's later *Oration for Nanni Strozzi* (1428).²⁰ Hankins does not examine how Bruni explicitly dealt with kingship in his earlier civic humanist treatises, nor does he investigate Bruni's translation of Xenophon's *Hiero* in this context.

¹⁵ Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, rev. edn. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

¹⁶ Jerrold E. Seigel, *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Renaissance Humanism: The Union of Eloquence and Wisdom, Petrarch to Valla* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968); James Hankins, 'The "Baron Thesis" after Forty Years and some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56:2 (April 1995), 309–38.

¹⁷ David Quint, 'Humanism and Modernity: A Reconsideration of Bruni's Dialogues', *Renaissance Quarterly* 38:3 (Autumn 1985), 423–45.

¹⁸ Leonardo Bruni, *Dialogi ad Petrum Paulum Histrum*, ed. Stefano Ugo Baldassarri (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1994), 15.

¹⁹ Gene Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 300–02.

²⁰ James Hankins, 'Rhetoric, History, and Ideology: The Civic Panegyrics of Leonardo Bruni', in James Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143–78; Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 422–3.

The enormous popularity and influence of Bruni's translation of the *Hiero*, combined with the political focus of the treatise, make its absence from these historiographical debates particularly striking. The translation survives in 200 manuscripts.²¹ It was printed three times in Italy in the 1470s, before any of Xenophon's other works were published.²² In addition, references to Bruni's translation in the treatises of his contemporaries and later thinkers clearly demonstrate its popularity. The humanist Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's *On the Benefits of the Curia* discussed sensual and material pleasures in the same order as Xenophon had treated the subject in the *Hiero*.²³ Poggio Bracciolini referred to the *Hiero* repeatedly in his *On the Unhappiness of Princes*.²⁴ Leon Battista Alberti alluded to the work in his *Momus*.²⁵ Girolamo Savanorola's discussion of the happiness of princes in his *Treatise on the Florentine Government* betrays familiarity with the *Hiero*.²⁶ Machiavelli used ideas from the *Hiero* in both the *Prince* and his *Discourses on Livy*.²⁷ Nearly two centuries after Bruni's translation, it was formerly thought that Queen Elizabeth I herself attempted to translate Bruni's Latin version of the *Hiero* into English. The most recent scholarship, however, suggests that the queen was not in fact the translator in the relevant manuscript.²⁸

In addition to its popularity, the central ideas of the *Hiero* fit into the modern historical debate over Bruni's political ideas in the early fifteenth century. Xenophon's work addresses the potential happiness of tyrants. It has two major parts. The first and longer portion of the work consists of the tyrant Hiero's proof to the poet Simonides '... that the life of a tyrant, as compared with the life of a private man, is so unhappy that the tyrant can hardly do better than to hang himself'.²⁹ Hiero argued his point through examples of a tyrant's lack of pleasure and a series of unfavourable comparisons between the burden of ruling and the carefree life of being ruled. Simonides countered Hiero's arguments in the second part of the treatise. In contrast to Hiero's

²¹ James Hankins, *Repertorium Brunianum: A Critical Guide to the Writings of Leonardo Bruni* (Rome: Istituto Storico Italiano per il Medio Evo, 1997), 264. See also Marsh, 'Xenophon', 149–55.

²² Marsh, 'Xenophon', 81 and 155.

²³ Christopher S. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 168–91.

²⁴ Poggio Bracciolini, *De infelicitate principum*, ed. Davide Canfora (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1998), 76.

²⁵ Mario Martelli, 'Minima in *Momo* libello adnotanda', *Albertiana* 1 (1998), 105–07. cf. Leon Battista Alberti, *Momus*, ed. Virginia Brown and Sarah Knight, trans. Sarah Knight (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 381.

²⁶ Stefano Ugo Baldassarri and Arielle Saiber (eds.), *Images of Quattrocento Florence: Selected Writings in Literature, History, and Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 263. cf. Leo Strauss, *On Tyranny*, rev. edn. (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), 8–13.

²⁷ Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, eds. Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 79n; Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses*, 2.2. cf. Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 22–4, 57; W. R. Newell, 'Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter', *Southern Political Science Association* 50:1 (February 1988), 109 and 128.

²⁸ L. Bradner, 'The Xenophon Translation Attributed to Queen Elizabeth I', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 27 (1964), 324–6.

²⁹ Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 29.

contentions, Simonides argued that a tyrant has the potential to receive far more benefits and joy than the people over whom he rules. Simonides' advice to Hiero concerning how to be a happy ruler occupies the remainder of the treatise. Through the points of Simonides, the implicit conclusion of the treatise is that a tyrant should rule like a 'good king'.³⁰

Bruni's translation of the *Hiero* thus seems to fit snugly into the most recent historical scholarship on his thought, namely that Bruni accepted both monarchy and republicanism as legal and potentially benign forms of government. In fact the *Hiero* suggests that Bruni expressed this opinion even in his earliest published translations. Yet, Bruni's support of monarchy seems to be inconsistent with the ostensibly republican ideas in his early original works. For example, in the first book of the *Dialogues*, Niccolò Niccoli condemned Dante for his decision to damn Brutus and Cassius in the *Divine Comedy*. Niccoli argued that Julius Caesar had snatched liberty from the Roman people.³¹ In the second book, Niccoli maintained his claim that Caesar was a tyrant, but suggested that Dante meant the damning of Brutus and Cassius as an allegory.³² The implication seems clear: Bruni was equating the establishment of one-man rule over Rome with tyranny and the old republican form of government with liberty. The apparent contradiction between the pro-monarchical *Hiero* and the ideas in Bruni's earliest original works led Luzi Schucan to suggest that the translation of the *Hiero* was an aberration from Bruni's consistent republicanism. According to Schucan, Bruni translated the *Hiero* to support Coluccio Salutati's recent work, *On the Tyrant*, in which Salutati had argued in favour of monarchy. In this interpretation, Bruni returned to promoting republicanism in works like the *Dialogues* and the *Panegyric to the City of Florence* in the years following the translation of the *Hiero*.³³ However, a close analysis of Bruni's early treatises suggests a much more consistent approach to the issue of kings and tyrants throughout Bruni's early works. In fact, Bruni seems to have accepted the idea that legal claim, rather than type of rule, defined good government, an idea also expressed in Salutati's *On the Tyrant*.

As Roberto Weiss has argued, the temporal proximity of Salutati's *On the Tyrant* (1400) and its similar subject matter with Bruni's translation of the *Hiero* make it likely that Bruni intended his translation to complement Salutati's treatise.³⁴ Salutati had written his *On the Tyrant* to defend Dante's

³⁰ Xenophon, *Scripta minora*, rev. edn., ed and trans. E. C. Marchant and G. W. Bowersock (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), xvi. The conclusion is implicit because Xenophon refers to Hiero as a tyrant throughout the treatise. cf. Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 1–20; Newell, 'Machiavelli and Xenophon', 115. Bruni follows Xenophon and uses the Latin term 'tyrannus' in his translation. I have consulted Bruni's translation in MS 93.1, 62v–68v in the Newberry Library in Chicago, IL. On this manuscript, see Paul Henry Saenger, *A Catalogue of the pre-1500 Western Manuscript Books at the Newberry Library* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989), 175–7.

³¹ Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 73.

³² *Ibid.*, 81.

³³ Schucan, *Das Nachleben*, 79.

³⁴ Weiss, 'Gli Inizi', 252; cf. Ronald G. Witt, *Hercules at the Crossroads: The Life, Works, and Thought of Coluccio Salutati* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1983), 309.

decision to damn the assassins of Julius Caesar to the deepest part of hell.³⁵ In doing so, Dante had entered into an old debate about whether Julius Caesar was a tyrant, justly slain, or a king, cruelly murdered.³⁶ This debate continued with Salutati and his learned circle, as indicated not only by Salutati's own treatise but also the translations of Plutarch's *Life of Brutus* (1400) and *Life of Cicero* (1401) by Jacopo Angeli da Scaperia.³⁷ Salutati framed his *On the Tyrant* as a response to a student from Padua who had written to ask Salutati for his opinion about this debate, particularly his thoughts on Brutus and Cassius.³⁸ Ephraim Emerton claimed that Salutati was aware that his answer would provoke further controversy. Emerton pointed to Salutati's disclaimer near the beginning of this treatise. Salutati had written that 'if I shall disappoint your expectation ascribe it in part to my ignorance, but partly to yourself for having greater hopes of me than experience shall have shown to be warranted.'³⁹ That is, if he erred in his opinions, Salutati claimed only half the blame. The addressee of the work must take the rest.⁴⁰

Salutati argued that Caesar had been a legal ruler, not a tyrant, and thus Brutus and Cassius deserved their place in hell. According to Salutati, a tyrant was one who 'rules a state without the forms of law'.⁴¹ Such a person could fall into two categories. Some tyrants are tyrants of character. These individuals lacked power, but coveted it in order to do wicked actions.⁴² Others are tyrants of action. Salutati argued that under this category fell

... one who usurps a government, having no legal title for his rule, or one who governs *superbe* or rules unjustly or does not observe law or equity; just as, on the other hand, he is a lawful prince upon whom the right to govern is conferred who administers justice and maintains the laws.⁴³

Salutati's definition placed a particular emphasis on the role of law in defining a tyrant. Rulers who lacked claim to rule or who ruled against the law were tyrants. By contrast, princes were rulers who possessed a title to rule and did so in accordance with the law. With a tyrant defined, Salutati turned to the issue of tyrannicide. He argued that subjects could legally resist and even kill a tyrant. In fact, even suspicion of plans to illegally usurp power could be grounds for resisting a tyrant. No matter how long a tyrant ruled, subjects

³⁵ Ronald G. Witt, 'The *De Tyranno* and Coluccio Salutati's View of Politics and Roman History', *Nuova Rivista Storica* 53 (1969), 441.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 443–50.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 472.

³⁸ Ephraim Emerton, *Humanism and Tyranny: Studies in the Italian Trecento* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1925), 70; cf. Coluccio Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat vom Tyrannen: Eine kulturgeschichtliche Untersuchung nebst Textedition*, ed. Alfred von Martin (Berlin: Walther Rothschild, 1913), I.

³⁹ Emerton, *Humanism and Tyranny*, 73. cf. the Latin in Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, IV.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 76; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, VI.

⁴² *Ibid.*; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, VII.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 78; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, IX.

could rebel against him. However, a tyrant could become a legal ruler if an overlord or the implied consent of the tyrant's subjects granted him such status. Should a tyrant become a legal ruler by either means, an uprising must possess the consent of the overlord or, if an overlord does not exist, the citizens. Without the consent of the proper party, acts against a legal ruler are unacceptable regardless of the quality of rule.⁴⁴

Salutati then applied his definition of a tyrant to the case of Julius Caesar. He argued that the civil war at the end of the Roman Republic revolved not around if 'one man should rule', but rather 'which of the two it should be'.⁴⁵ The Republic, thus, was no longer a potential form of government. Divine Will dictated that Caesar defeat Pompey. The implication is that God, the highest of overlords, had consented to Caesar's rise to power. Once in power, Caesar ruled benignly. Moreover, the citizens of Rome rewarded Caesar with the title of dictator and other honours, all in recognition of his atonement for the civil war through his benevolent actions as a ruler. Through Salutati's characterization, Caesar lacked both characteristics of the tyrant of action. Caesar did not rule *superbe* and he possessed a legal claim to rule through the consent of the Roman citizens. Since Caesar was a lawful prince, Brutus and Cassius had illegally murdered him and deserved their place in hell. Salutati emphasized their crime by praising monarchy. 'Is it not sound politics, approved by the judgment of all wise men', he wrote, 'that the monarchy is to be preferred to all other forms of government, provided that it be in the hands of a wise and good man?'⁴⁶ That is, monarchy is a potential form of good government and Julius Caesar was an example of a good king.

Bruni's translation of the pro-monarchical *Hiero* suggests that he agreed with Salutati's praise of good kings. Xenophon's advice to rulers in the *Hiero* and Salutati's treatment of Julius Caesar in the *On the Tyrant* both point to the possibility of a benign and legal king. Yet, Bruni did not translate the *Hiero* solely as an appendix to Salutati's *On the Tyrant*. Salutati had formulated his arguments about kingship in order to defend Dante.⁴⁷ In fact, having exonerated Julius Caesar from the charge of tyranny, Salutati turned the focus of his treatise to defend Dante explicitly. He argued that Dante had been correct to damn the assassins of Caesar on moral, theological, and poetic grounds. On moral grounds, Dante was correct in damning Brutus and Cassius because they had killed a legal monarch. Brutus, in fact, had killed his own father. Dante was also correct on theological grounds. Since God had ordained that Caesar defeat Pompey in the civil war, Brutus and Cassius had acted against Divine Will. Lastly, Dante did not err on poetic grounds. Salutati argued that epic poems celebrate the deeds of successful individuals more than people

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 78–93; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, IX–XXII.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 98; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, XXVII.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 108; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, XXXV–XXXVI. This paragraph has summarized Emerton, *Humanism and Tyranny*, 93–110; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, XXIII–XXXVIII.

⁴⁷ Witt, 'The *De Tyranno*', 441.

that fail. The actions of Brutus and Cassius led to more war and eventually suicide by both men. Therefore, Dante had been correct in condemning two failed men.⁴⁸

By contrast, Bruni disagreed with Salutati about Dante and particularly about Julius Caesar.⁴⁹ Both of Bruni's earliest original treatises express ambivalence towards Dante and the other vernacular poets of the Trecento. Bruni's *Panegyric* avoided the topic of Trecento culture in Florence altogether, devoting even less space to the topic than his model for the work, the *Panathenaic Oration* by Aristides.⁵⁰ Bruni's *Dialogues* was more engaged in this topic, revolving around the question of the revival of classical learning around the turn of the fifteenth century. Famously, the first dialogue depicted a meeting of Coluccio Salutati, Leonardo Bruni, Niccolò Niccoli, and Roberto Rossi at Salutati's house. Salutati attempted to entice his visitors into a learned debate in order to hone their intellects. Yet, Niccoli resisted him, complaining that the state of learning in their times was so poor that '... no disputant can appear other than absurd'.⁵¹ He bemoaned that the thousand years separating them from the ancients robbed them of learning. Salutati encouraged Niccoli to be more positive and focus on the texts that survived. Moreover, he argued, recent times had produced Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, all of whom deserved praise. These comments incited a diatribe from Niccoli against the three crowned poets of Florence and their supposed learning.⁵² In the Second Dialogue, Niccoli seemingly retracted his harsh criticisms of these three Florentine poets, stating that he had simply been trying to provoke Salutati to defend them on the previous day. He then himself issued a spirited defence.⁵³ However, David Quint has convincingly demonstrated that Niccoli actually avoided refuting his arguments. His laudations of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio actually amount to further criticisms of them thinly veiled under the guise of praise.⁵⁴

Bruni's disagreement with Salutati about Dante stemmed at least in part from their disagreement over Julius Caesar. Salutati had argued that Caesar possessed a legal claim to be the first emperor of Rome. Therefore, Dante's

⁴⁸ Emerton, *Humanism and Tyranny*, 110–115; cf. Salutati, *Coluccio Salutati's Traktat*, XXXVIII–XXXII.

⁴⁹ Ronald Witt has addressed the complex issue of how Salutati's *On the Tyrant* fits into the broader context of his thought. Witt argued that Salutati sometimes, but certainly not always, conceived of the distinction between tyranny and liberty as a matter of legality. He reached this conclusion at various points in his career. It was only in the late 1390s that, according to Witt, the influence of Dante led Salutati to use these grounds to defend Julius Caesar from the charge of tyranny. See Witt, 'The *De Tyranno*', 458–70. In fact, some traces of Salutati's indecision and inconsistency on these issues remain in the treatise. See Witt, 'The *De Tyranno*', 442. For the position of Dante in the thought of writers in Florence during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries more generally, see Simon A. Gilson, *Dante and Renaissance Florence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), esp. 54–93.

⁵⁰ Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 57–8; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 301.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 66; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 330.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 66–75; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 328–62.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 78–84; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 370–90.

⁵⁴ Quint, 'Humanism and Modernity', 430–42.

decision to damn the regicide Brutus was correct. Both the *Panegyric* and the *Dialogues* suggest that Bruni thought the exact opposite.⁵⁵ In these writings, Bruni argued that Caesar was a tyrant, not because he ruled alone, but because he seized power by force and then ruled wickedly. Therefore, Dante was wrong to condemn Brutus, who deserved the highest praise for slaying a tyrant. Even as Salutati and Bruni disagreed about the particular case of Julius Caesar, both men accepted the same criteria for distinguishing between kings and tyrants. Bruni's translation of the *Hiero*, therefore, furthered Salutati's pro-monarchical arguments in the *On the Tyrant* even as Bruni disagreed with Salutati's application of these ideas.

In his *Panegyric to the City of Florence*, Bruni revealed that he agreed with his mentor about monarchy, but, unlike Salutati, he was at best ambivalent regarding Caesar. In the midst of his *Panegyric*, Bruni argued that Florence had been founded under the Roman Republic, not the empire has had been previously thought. He contended that the land claims and the qualities of the Roman people therefore passed to Florence.⁵⁶ To make his point, Bruni had to demonstrate that the Roman people had not lost their claim to rule when the Republic fell to the emperors. He also had to demonstrate on what grounds Florence could claim the inheritance of Rome. Bruni argued the second of these points by drawing a parallel to the process of royal succession. He wrote that

Now I believe that in the case of royal successions there is a custom observed by most peoples, namely, that the person who is finally declared to be heir to the king must be born at the time his father possessed the royal dignity. Those offspring who are born either before or after are not considered to be the sons of a king, nor are they permitted to have the right of succession to their father's kingdom.⁵⁷

Bruni was praising Florence for being the heir to the greatest age in Roman history, the late Republic, stating that the acts of individuals during such a period are 'always especially outstanding'.⁵⁸ Significantly, Bruni made his point about the republican inheritance of Florence by comparing it to royal succession. Like Salutati, he highlighted the claim of a ruler to power as the difference between a king and a tyrant. Only individuals born when a ruler 'possessed the royal dignity' had a claim to rule.

⁵⁵ On the following points, compare my findings with those of Sarah M. Loose, 'Hero or Tyrant: Images of Julius Caesar in Selected Works from Vergil to Bruni' (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 2007). Loose has independently reached many of the same conclusions that I have regarding the treatment of Julius Caesar in the writings of Salutati and Bruni. However, Loose and I diverge in our interpretation of Bruni's ideas about monarchs and republics.

⁵⁶ Benjamin G. Kohl and Ronald G. Witt (eds.), *The Earthly Republic: Italian Humanists on Government and Society* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978), 149–51; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 236–42.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 150–151; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 240.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 151; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 242.

Bruni contrasted this conception of legal monarchy with the example of the early Roman emperors. Immediately following his comparison of the republican inheritance of Florence to royal succession, Bruni began a diatribe against the Roman emperors. He accused the ‘Caesars, the Antonines, the Tiberiuses, the Neros – those plagues and destroyers of the Roman Republic . . .’ of robbing the Roman People of their liberty.⁵⁹ He called them the ‘vilest of thieves’.⁶⁰ He continued, ‘For this reason I think something has been true and is true in this city more than in any other; the men of Florence especially enjoy perfect freedom and are the greatest enemies of tyrants.’⁶¹ The emperors, for Bruni, were tyrants because they had stolen liberty rather than coming to power in a lawful fashion. Moreover, they ruled *superbe* rather than with benevolence.

Bruni’s semi-official work had good reason to make these arguments about the Roman emperors. Specifically, the arguments are used in the treatise to launch a less than subtle attack on the Roman emperors of Bruni’s own day and their Ghibelline supporters, referring repeatedly to the continuing Florentine fight against these usurpers. Bruni stated explicitly ‘If at other times these political factions were called by different names, still they were not really different. From the beginning Florence has always been united in one and the same cause against the invaders of the roman state and it has constantly persevered in this policy to the present time.’⁶² Bruni’s example of Caligula provides further evidence for this point. Bruni described in some detail the worst reputed deeds of Caligula, including his slaughter of citizens and incestuous conduct with his sisters.⁶³ Bruni argued that ‘For these reasons who will wonder that the city of Rome had such hatred against the imperial faction and that this hatred has even lasted down to the present?’⁶⁴ Caligula’s outrageous, immoral, and criminal actions robbed him of any legal claim to rule. In other words, Caligula and the other emperors like him, many of whom Bruni attacks by name, were tyrants. The Florentines, and particularly their ruling party, the Guelfs, had always fought against such tyrants and their followers, that is the Ghibelline faction. In fact, one of the reasons Bruni claimed to have written this passage was to demonstrate that ‘Florence has not, without good cause, developed its political allegiances’.⁶⁵

Yet, the debate in Salutati’s *On the Tyrant* was explicitly about Julius Caesar, not all the Roman emperors. Even in Bruni’s earliest original work after his

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 150; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 242.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 242.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 242.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 152; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 244.

⁶³ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 244–6.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 153; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 246.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 154; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 250. Ironically, Bruni’s arguments for the foundation of Florence under the Roman Republic rather than the Empire probably derived from Salutati, even as the two men appear to have disagreed about Caesar when Bruni presented his own version of this idea. See Witt, ‘The *De Tyranno*’, 471.

translation of the *Hiero*, Bruni expressed doubts about Salutati's treatment of this figure. He bemoaned the crimes of Julius Caesar even as he declined to provide specific details about these wicked deeds. Instead, Bruni cited the classical authority of Lucan for Caesar's treacherous actions, writing that Lucan had described the 'truth concerning those crimes'.⁶⁶ Bruni acknowledged that some thinkers disagreed with Lucan. He conceded that Caesar's virtues at times outweighed his vices. He declined to list any of Caesar's crimes, a notable omission since he even listed specific crimes for Caesar Augustus, another emperor whom Bruni claimed that he would pass over in silence.⁶⁷ The *Panegyric*, in short, suggests that Bruni accepted monarchy as a legal form of government and makes clear that the Roman emperors after Julius Caesar and Augustus were tyrants because they ruled wickedly. Yet, Bruni retreated from his argument when applied to Julius Caesar. Perhaps he wished to avoid controversy in a treatise designed to praise Florence. Bruni may have thought that by condemning Caesar, his readers would recall Dante's favourable opinion of that man. A treatise praising Florence was not the place, potentially, to condemn one of its most famous sons. Another possibility is that Bruni himself was unsure of where Julius Caesar fit into his conception of legal kings versus illegal tyrants. Salutati had argued that Julius Caesar was a king. Lucan had argued that he was a tyrant. If Bruni was unsure when he wrote his *Panegyric*, his opinion had solidified by the time he wrote his *Dialogues*.

In the first *Dialogue*, Niccoli condemned Dante for his treatment of Brutus and Cassius. Niccoli berated Dante for his confusion about Marcus Cato's age at the time of his death. He continued that

... what is more serious and intolerable is his damning with the greatest penalty Marcus Brutus, a man distinguished for justice, discretion, magnanimity – in short, for every virtue – because he slew Caesar and plucked from robbers' jaws the liberty of the Roman people. But for driving out a king he placed Junius Brutus in the Elysian Fields. And yet Tarquin had received the kingdom from his forefathers, and was king at a time when the laws permitted that there be a king; whereas Caesar had taken possession of the commonwealth by force of arms, and when the good citizens had been slain he had taken away his country's liberty. Therefore if Marcus is wicked, Junius must necessarily be more wicked; but if Junius is to be praised for driving out a king, why should Marcus not be exalted to heaven for cutting down a tyrant?⁶⁸

Just as suggested in his selection of the pro-monarchical *Hiero*, Bruni accepted monarchical rule. He contrasted a lawful ruler, Tarquin, with an illegal one, Julius Caesar. Moreover, he applied the same criteria to evaluating monarchical rule as Salutati had in his *On the Tyrant*. Bruni argued that Tarquin – that

⁶⁶ Kohl and Witt, *The Earthly Republic*, 153; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 248.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 153–4; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 248–50.

⁶⁸ Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 73; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 354.

is Tarquin the Proud, whose wicked rule help bring about the end of the Roman kings – was a legal king. Bruni's reasoning was that the laws permitted a king to exist and that Tarquin possessed claim to rule from his ancestors.⁶⁹ The opponent of such a lawful monarch, even one like Tarquin the Proud, deserved the severest censure. He contrasted Tarquin, a legal king, with Julius Caesar, who lacked a legal claim to power. Bruni argued that, unlike Tarquin, Caesar possessed power by 'force of arms'. Therefore, Julius Caesar was an illegal government usurper and a tyrant. Marcus Brutus, the slayer of a tyrant, deserved the highest praise.

Bruni's argument regarding the type of praise that Marcus Brutus deserved may, in fact, have derived from the *Hiero*. In the midst of the *Hiero*, the conversation between Simonides and Hiero turned to tyrannicide. Hiero argued that private people condemn murderers and even censure the accomplices to a homicide. By contrast, '... the cities greatly honour the one who kills the tyrant; and instead of excluding the killer from sacred rites, as they do the murderers of private men, the cities erect in their temples statues of those who have committed such an act.'⁷⁰ Hiero, thus, framed the reward fitting for a person committing tyrannicide as heavenly. That is, the slayers of tyrants were rewarded with representations of them in religious places. In the *Dialogues*, Bruni also described the reward for a tyrannicide in heavenly terms. Although he used different language, the type of praise remained the same. In this case, Marcus Brutus, the slayer of a tyrant, deserved to be 'exalted to heaven'.⁷¹

Bruni's treatment of Julius Caesar in the Second Dialogue was consistent with the First. The Second Dialogue opened with an explicit return to the themes discussed in Bruni's *Panegyric to the City of Florence*. Two interlocutors in the treatise, Piero Sermini and Coluccio Salutati, praised Bruni for his laudations of their city in the *Panegyric*. The section then quickly turned to Bruni's treatment in the earlier work of Julius Caesar and the early Roman emperors in general.⁷² Piero Sermini commented that he approved of Bruni's argument that the Guelf party in Florence possessed a 'splendid origin' and that the

⁶⁹ Interestingly, Bruni is more adamant that Tarquin the Proud was a legal king than the ancient historian Livy. Livy had argued that Tarquin '... had indeed no right to the throne but might, since he was ruling neither by popular decree nor senatorial sanction.' Shortly after, Livy returned to the theme when he questioned whether the Roman people had granted Tarquin 'sovereignty' over them. Livy, *History of Rome from the Founding of the City*, the Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 1:173–5.

⁷⁰ Strauss, *On Tyranny*, 9.

⁷¹ Bruni's language in the *Dialogues* is '... cur non Marcus in celum tollendus, quod tyrannum occiderit?' Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 354; Bruni's Latin translation of the *Hiero* reads '... statuae suis templis deorum immortalium collocare.' Newberry Library, MS 93.1, 65v. Bruni uses this language at least two other times in the *Dialogues*, '... in celum tollatur...' Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 364. In this case, Bruni wondered why Caesar should 'be raised to the sky' since he was the 'parricide of his fatherland.' In *Ibid.*, 366, Bruni wrote '... in celum tollere...' In this case, Salutati was arguing that Caesar ought to be 'raised to the sky'. This similarity in language may suggest that Bruni was using a trope phrase; however, it seems significant that all these instances appear in the context of a discussion about tyranny.

⁷² Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 76; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 362–4.

party '... was taken up by this city with proper and perfect right'.⁷³ He continued that Bruni '... cast great odium upon the Caesarean faction (that is, the Ghibellines), which is hostile to ours, by relating their crimes and by lamenting the lost liberty of the Roman people'.⁷⁴ In this passage, Bruni returned to the significance of his arguments regarding the Roman emperors. The Guelf party drew its origins from a powerful people with a legal claim to power. The Ghibellines traced their origins to tyrants who lacked such a claim.

In this Second Dialogue, however, Bruni took the argument further and explicitly included Julius Caesar among the tyrants who had illegally seized power from the Roman people. Bruni's interlocutors cite a series of classical authorities in defence of the opinion that Caesar was a wicked ruler. Although Bruni had expressed ambivalence towards Julius Caesar in the *Panegyric*, the interlocutors in the Second Dialogue begin their discussion of Julius Caesar as if Bruni had unequivocally condemned him in the earlier work. Piero Sermini claimed that in the *Panegyric* Bruni followed Lactantius Firmianus, the classical author who had accused Julius Caesar of being the 'parricide of his fatherland'.⁷⁵ Bruni thus established the authority of the ancients to back up his argument about Julius Caesar. Worse than just a tyrant, Caesar had murdered his country.

The interlocutor Salutati claims to counter Piero Sermini's arguments, but actually adds more evidence to them through his half-hearted and ineffective defence of Julius Caesar. First, Salutati conceded that Bruni could have used any number of ancient sources to support his opinion that Caesar was a villain, including Cicero, Lucan, and Suetonius. Next, Salutati claimed that, regardless of the testimony of the ancients, he had defended Caesar in his *On the Tyrant* and could not be persuaded to abandon his high opinion of him.⁷⁶ However, he cites no evidence in favour of his cause. Instead, Salutati offered more arguments to further condemn Julius Caesar. He stated that he did not want his sons to emulate Caesar, but rather figures in Roman history who had combined 'moral purity' with 'military virtue'.⁷⁷ He admitted again that ancient sources had decried the morality of Caesar himself. Salutati stated that Bruni had done well to present Caesar's good and bad qualities, 'so as to recommend his cause to fair-minded listeners'.⁷⁸ The statement is a *non sequitur* because Salutati has still offered no evidence of Caesar's virtues. In fact, he stated that he is unsure if Caesar possessed 'moral purity' and admitted that Caesar's biographers state that he did not.

⁷³ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 364.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 364.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 364.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 76–7; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 364–6.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 77; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 366.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 366.

Bruni's condemnation of Caesar enabled him to more forcefully argue his points about the origins of the Guelf and Ghibellines in Florence. After the portrayal of Caesar as an immoral parricide, Salutati claims that

I have no doubt it was then that Florence took up this party cause, and thus began this lawful association. What followed later, when those brave men went forth into Apulia against Manfred to avenge the city . . . that was not the origin of the party but its splendid restoration. For at that time those who felt differently from the will of this people had seized control of the state.⁷⁹

The claim of the Guelf party to rule Florence predated the Caesars. Moreover, the Caesars, starting with the first emperor Julius Caesar, seized power illegally and ruled *superbe*. Therefore, the Florentine Guelf party possessed 'lawful' claim to rule the city, whereas the Ghibellines did not. Bruni was arguing that the claim to rule of the Guelfs came into being, not in 1266 and thus long after the establishment of the Caesars and their claim to rule, but rather before even the first emperor. Implicitly he went even further. Even if the claim of the Guelfs did not predate the Empire, the Roman emperors, from Julius Caesar forward, were tyrants. As tyrants, they and their Ghibelline followers lacked a claim to rule.

Bruni's Second Dialogue continued along the same lines regarding Julius Caesar, again resorting to a definition of a tyrant very similar to the one Salutati had used in the *On the Tyrant*. The Second Dialogue contained a feigned recantation by Niccolò Niccoli of his condemnation of the three Florentine poets from the First Dialogue.⁸⁰ Amidst this discussion, Niccoli returned to the issue of Julius Caesar. To counter his previous critique of Dante's damning of Brutus and Cassius, Niccoli offered a lengthy rebuttal. The passage began by hinting at Caesar's unlawful acquisition of power. 'Do you suppose that Dante, the most learned man of his age, did not know how Caesar had attained power? That he did not know liberty was abolished and a diadem placed on Caesar's head by Mark Antony while the Roman people groaned?'⁸¹ Dante knew that Caesar had obtained power illegally. Moreover, Caesar received this power while the Roman people, who possessed legal power over the Roman government, 'groaned'. Thus, Caesar came to power without a legal claim and against the wishes of the relevant party. He was a tyrant.

Bruni continued. Brutus, by contrast, was a virtuous man, a slayer of tyrants. 'Do you think that he (Dante) was ignorant of the great virtue with which all histories agree Brutus had been endowed? For who does not praise the man's

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 366.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 79–84; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 374–90.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 81; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 378–80.

justice, integrity, diligence and greatness of spirit?⁸² Dante knew all this, according to Niccoli, but wished to create an allegory.

No, Dante was not ignorant of this; but in Caesar he represented the legitimate prince and the just, worldly monarch, in Brutus the seditious, trouble-making criminal who sinfully slays this prince – not because Brutus was of this sort, for if he were, on what ground would the Senate have praised him as the recoverer of liberty?⁸³

In Caesar, Dante represented a lawful and good prince and in Brutus he symbolized an illegal regicide. Again, Bruni drew a clear difference between legal kings and illegal tyrants. Dante had symbolized in Brutus the serious criminal nature of regicides. He had symbolized a good king in Julius Caesar. Dante knew of but ignored the actual legal or illegal, regal or tyrannical, quality of Julius Caesar's rule. He wrote, 'But since Caesar had ruled, whatever the manner, and since Brutus together with more than sixty noble citizens had slain him, the poet took from this material for invention.'⁸⁴ Bruni highlighted the fact that Dante had ignored in his allegory the actual manner of Caesar's rule. Moreover, Bruni made clear that Brutus had acted with much support, a key indicator that the highest authority in Rome at that time, the Roman people (since an overlord was lacking), supported the slayer of Caesar.

Bruni concluded his discussion with a final stab at Caesar. Having defended Dante's knowledge of the events surrounding Caesar's assassination, Bruni raised the question of why exactly Dante would place Brutus and Cassius next to Judas in hell. Bruni's interlocutor Niccoli argued that poets and painters often go to extremes in their representation of people in the past. However, Niccoli contended, '... it could well be maintained that Brutus was impious in slaying Caesar; for there are not lacking authors who – whether on account of good will toward those parties, or to please the emperors – call that deed of Brutus wicked and impious. But for that matching of Christ and Caesar the first defence seems more probable, and I have no doubt our poet felt so.'⁸⁵ Bruni acknowledged that some sources defended Caesar, but quickly dismissed them. These sources for one reason or another were biased in favour of a wicked man. Dante could not have believed such sources. Therefore, he must have been making an allegory. Once again, Bruni expressed his deep scepticism over Salutati's opinion in the *On the Tyrant* about Julius Caesar. At the same time, the foundation of Bruni's opinion rested on the same distinction between kings and tyrants that Salutati had elaborated in his treatise.⁸⁶

⁸² *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 380.

⁸³ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 380.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 380.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*; cf. Bruni Aretino, *Histoire*, 380.

⁸⁶ The manuscript of Bruni's translation of the *Hiero* in the Newberry Library provides a final, albeit more speculative, piece of evidence linking this translation to the debate over Julius Caesar. Immediately following

Bruni's translation of the *Hiero*, therefore, fit into a consistent dichotomy between kings and tyrants in Bruni's early writings. This dichotomy was the same as Coluccio Salutati had presented in his *On the Tyrant*. The distinction between kings and tyrants allowed Bruni to discredit the legal foundation of the Ghibelline party and establish the Guelfs as possessing a stronger claim to rule Florence. A full discussion of Bruni's application of these ideas in his later works and translations, particularly his *History of the Florentine People*, would require a much longer study; however, a few comments taken from the secondary scholarship point to the significance of these ideas and their continued presence in his later writings.⁸⁷ For example, Bruni's argument for the classical, rather than papal or French, origins of the Guelf party was innovative and had wide-ranging repercussions.⁸⁸ As Mikael Hörnquist has argued, Bruni's arguments enabled the Florentines to strengthen their own claim for imperial rule over their neighbours.⁸⁹ Riccardo Fubini has argued that Bruni's new conception of the origins of Florence led to the development of a new conception of the territorial state.⁹⁰ Both Fubini and later Gary Ianziti have pointed to the fuller treatment of these ideas in Bruni's *History of the Florentine People*.⁹¹ Bruni codified his new conception of the origins of the Guelf party in 1420. Here, Bruni contrasted the devotion of the Guelfs to liberty against the

the end of the *Hiero*, the manuscript contains a portion of a letter from Julius Caesar to Cicero, which Cicero had transcribed into one of his many letters to Atticus. According to Cicero, Caesar wrote 'You are right to infer of me (for I am well known to you) that there is nothing further from my nature than cruelty. Whilst I take great pleasure from that fact, I am proud indeed that my action wins your approval. I am not moved because it is said that those, whom I let go, have departed to wage war on me again, for there is nothing I like better than that I should be true to myself and they to themselves.' Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, trans. E. O. Winstedt, The Loeb Classical Library (London: William Heinemann, 1921), 2:260–63. This source also contains the original Latin. The manuscript quotation ends at this point, although Cicero's actual transcription of the letter continues to discuss Caesar's desire to see Cicero in Rome and Cicero's relative Dolabella. Cf. Newberry Library 93.1, 68v. An in-depth investigation of the frequency with which this epistolary excerpt is copied into manuscripts with Bruni's *Hiero* would reveal if the manuscript in the Newberry is representative of a common pairing of the texts or an aberration. If the pairing in the Newberry manuscript is common, the pairing of the texts, I think, provides strong evidence that Bruni's *Hiero* was seen as contributing to the debate over the status of Julius Caesar as a benign king or a wicked tyrant.

⁸⁷ I am currently preparing an essay on the political significance of Bruni's distinction between kings and tyrants in his *History of Florence*. Another possible area for research would be to investigate the influence of Xenophon's much longer *Cyropaedia* on Bruni's later writings. The *Cyropaedia* addressed many of the same issues as the *Hiero*, but was not translated from Greek to Latin until the late 1430s. Marsh, *Xenophon*, 116–38. Bruni did not translate this work; however, he may have read it as early as 1407, the year in which he requested a copy of it from the Venetian Piero Miani. Botley, *Latin Translation*, 10.

⁸⁸ Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 17–18.

⁸⁹ Mikael Hörnquist, 'The Two Myths of Civic Humanism', in James Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 105–42.

⁹⁰ Riccardo Fubini, 'Note Preliminari sugli "Historiarum florentini populi libri XII" di Leonardo Bruni', in *Storiografia dell'Umanesimo in Italia da Leonardo Bruni ad Anno da Viterbo* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003), 93–130; Riccardo Fubini, 'La Rivendicazione di Firenze della Sovranità Statale e il Contributo delle «Historiae» di Leonardo Bruni', in *Storiografia dell'Umanesimo in Italia da Leonardo Bruni ad Anno da Viterbo* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003), 131–64.

⁹¹ Fubini, 'Note Preliminari'; Fubini, 'La Rivendicazione di Firenze'; Gary Ianziti, 'Challenging Chronicles: Leonardo Bruni's *History of the Florentine People*, in Sharon Dale, Alison Williams Lewin and Duane J. Oscheim (eds.), *Chronicling History: Chroniclers and Historians in Medieval and Renaissance Italy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 249–72.

attempts of the Ghibelline party to 'subject itself and Italy to tyrants and foreigners'.⁹² That is, the Ghibellines sought to subject the Italian peninsula to the rule of the Roman emperors and their supposed successors, both of whom lacked the legal claim to rule that the Guelf party in Florence possessed. Without a legal claim to rule, they were tyrants.

Other later works by Bruni also contain the same legal distinction between kings and tyrants. In a 1413 letter to the Holy Roman Emperor, Bruni followed Aristotle in discussing the possible forms of good government.⁹³ Regarding monarchy, Bruni argued that a king must exercise his power for the good of the people that he rules, otherwise he became a tyrant. Bruni compared good and bad government to the rule of a father in the home. 'The authority of a father towards his sons mirrors the authority of kings. A father looks over his sons; he governs with justice and rules for their benefit.' Bruni continued, 'However, this is not the same thing as the relationship between a master and his slaves: a master does not seek the benefit of his slaves, but his own. A father, therefore, is like a king, but a master is similar to a tyrant.'⁹⁴ In these passages, Bruni focused on quality of rule as the distinction between kings and tyrants, a theme present even in his earliest writings. As James Hankins has argued, the sole aberration from this acceptance of monarchy as a potentially good form of government is found in Bruni's *Oration for Nanni Strozzi* from 1428.⁹⁵ Hankins has convincingly argued that this statement was caused by Bruni's 'tendency to flattery and rhetorical exaggeration' in the work.⁹⁶ A letter from ten years later supports Hankins' interpretation. In 1438, Bruni wrote to Biondo Flavio and argued that kingship was the 'best of all the good [forms of government]'.⁹⁷

Like St Basil's *Letter*, Bruni chose to translate Xenophon's *Hiero* to contribute to a topic of debate among early fifteenth-century humanists. The *Hiero* argued that rulers ought to govern in a benevolent fashion to achieve the greatest amount of pleasure. These arguments were consistent with Bruni's own comments about kingship in his early original writings. Like Coluccio Salutati, Bruni viewed a valid claim to power and the quality of rule as the key determinants in good government. Thus, Xenophon supported the shared assumptions of Salutati and Bruni about the potential for and characteristics of monarchical rule. However, the two men disagreed about the implications of this distinction in the case of Julius Caesar and the reputation of Dante. Was

⁹² Griffiths, Hankins, and Thompson, *Humanism*, 49; cf. Cesare Guasti, ed., *Commissioni di Rinaldo degli Albizzi per il Comune di Firenze dal MCCCXCIX al MCCCXXXIII*, Documenti di Storia Italiana (Florence, 1873), 3:621.

⁹³ James Hankins, 'Unknown and Little-Known Texts of Leonardo Bruni', in *Humanism and Platonism in the Italian Renaissance*, Storia e Letteratura 215 (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2003), 1:25.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 27; 'Patris enim imperium erga filios regni instar obtinet. Presidet enim filiis pater; eque gubernat et regit pro eorum utilitate. At non sic dominus erga servos; non enim servorum utilitas a domino queritur, sed propria. In patre igitur similitudo regis, in domino autem tyranni.'

⁹⁵ Hankins, 'Rhetoric, History, and Ideology', 172.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 175–6.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 173.

Caesar a king or a tyrant? Bruni's arguments that Caesar was a tyrant carried implications for no less than the origins of the Florentine ruling party, the Guelfs, and the defamation of their enemies, the Ghibellines. More than just a short work for practice or an appendix to the *On the Tyrant*, the *Hiero* confirmed the dichotomy in Bruni's thought between kings and tyrants. He then used this dichotomy to attack Julius Caesar and defend the Guelf allegiance of the Florentine Republic.

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