



IDEAS IN CONTEXT

Italian Renaissance Humanism in the Mirror

PATRICK BAKER

ITALIAN RENAISSANCE HUMANISM IN THE MIRROR

This important study takes a new approach to understanding Italian Renaissance humanism, based not on scholarly paradigms or philosophical concepts, but on a neglected yet indispensable perspective: the humanists' understanding of themselves. Through a series of close textual studies, Patrick Baker excavates what humanists thought was important about humanism, how they viewed their own history, what goals they enunciated, what triumphs they celebrated – in short, he attempts to reconstruct humanist identity. What emerges is a small, coherent community dedicated primarily not to political ideology, a philosophy of man, an educational ethos, or moral improvement, but rather to the pursuit of classical Latin eloquence. Grasping the significance this stylistic ideal had for the humanists is essential to understanding both their sense of themselves and the importance they and others attached to their movement. For eloquence was no mere aesthetic affair, but rather appeared to them as the guarantor of civilization itself.

PATRICK BAKER is a senior research associate at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. He has previously published an English translation of two monographic essays by the late Salvatore Camporeale (co-edited with Christopher S. Celenza), entitled *Christianity, Latin-ity, and Culture: Two Studies on Lorenzo Valla*.

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PATRICK BAKER

Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin



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For My Parents

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Introduction

Italian Renaissance humanism entered its heyday in the second quarter of the fifteenth century. By then it had become a fixture in courts and chanceries all over the peninsula, had gained a sturdy foothold in universities, and had seeped into the consciousness of political and economic elites. Furthermore, Italian humanists could boast of a remarkable array of achievements, having hunted down an impressive number of wholly or partially lost ancient texts, reintroduced Greek to the Latin West, reformed Latin style and orthography to accord with classicizing tastes, and broadly instituted their brand of education in the classics. Finally, they were still relatively impervious to the twin challenges of the vernacular at home and cultural competition from across the Alps, both of which would eventually undermine their hegemony. It was a time of triumph – and of reflection. Having ascended to the apex of culture, Italian humanists turned around to take a view of the path they had trodden. They ruminated on their own education and development, recorded the deeds of the forerunners, founders, and great exponents of the humanist movement, took stock of the goals by which they had been guided, and honored the ideals that had nourished them on their way.

One such piece of humanist self-reflection is provided by Leonardo Bruni, the chancellor of Florence and the undisputed *princeps* of the city's intellectual life, who in old age committed to his *Memoirs* (ca. 1440) an account of his youthful studies, vividly recalling his fateful decision to abandon law and learn Greek with the Byzantine scholar and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras. Not only would he thus “come face to face with Homer, Plato and Demosthenes . . . and converse with them and become steeped in their marvellous teaching,” but he would also win “useful knowledge” and “abundant pleasure” as well as “enhanced repute,” since “for seven centuries now no one in Italy has cultivated the literature of Greece and yet we recognize that all learning comes from

there.”¹ Brunni then goes on to describe his cohort of fellow students. He singles out the Florentine patricians Roberto de’ Rossi and Palla Strozzi as two who had made the most progress, notes that some students, such as Jacopo Angeli da Scarperia, were of advanced age, and remarks that the logician Pier Paolo Vergerio, although “an ornament of the schools of Padua, was drawn by the reputation of Chrysoloras to come to Florence to study under him there.”² In a few, short paragraphs Brunni offers precious testimony about a formative moment in the evolution of humanism: the arrival of Manuel Chrysoloras and the enduring instauration of Greek studies in Italy. This passage holds many further insights for the historian: that Greek was pursued by rich and humble, young and old alike; that the opportunity afforded by Chrysoloras attracted to the city non-Florentines of established reputation in different fields; and that the young Brunni claimed to have been lured away from the assured income of a legal career by an idealistic longing to commune with the ancients.

Brunni’s *Memoirs* are also a valuable source for the way humanists viewed humanism and their involvement in it, giving voice to the passionate zeal for an (initially) unremunerative labor of love, to the regard for revered teachers, to the perceived importance of certain cities, and so on. In another sense, however, a source like the *Memoirs* is wholly unremarkable: it is far from unique. Even a cursory reading of humanist letters, literary prefaces and dedications, ceremonial speeches and poetry, biographies and works of history reveals that their authors enjoyed few things as much as commenting on the content, nature, and what they (usually) considered to be the success of humanism. There were also more formal sources for thinking about humanism, such as necrologies, funeral orations and anthologies, verse compilations in praise of great poets, and dialogues discussing the contributions of leading *litterati*.³ Ultimately, exhaustive accounts and

¹ Leonardo Brunni, *Memoirs [De temporibus suis]*, ed. and tr. James Hankins with D.J.W. Bradley, in Brunni, *History of the Florentine People*, ed. and tr. James Hankins, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 2001–2007), vol. III, pp. 320–321 (par. 25): “Homerum et Platonem et Demosthenem . . . intueri atque una colloqui ac eorum mirabili disciplina imbui . . . Septingentis iam annis nemo per Italiam graecas litteras tenuit, et tamen doctrinas omnes ab illis esse confitemur. Quanta igitur vel ad cognitionem utilitas vel ad famam accessio vel ad voluptatem cumulatio tibi ex linguae huius cognitione proveniet?” (tr. Bradley).

² Brunni, *Memoirs*, pp. 322–323 (par. 26): “cum Patavii studio floreret, secutus Chrysolorae famam, sese Florentiam contulerat ad eum audiendum.”

³ The following examples are meant only to be indicative, not exhaustive. Necrology: Mauro de Nichilo, *I viri illustres del cod. Vat. lat. 3920* (Rome, 1997). Funeral oration: Poggio Bracciolini, *Oratio funebris in obitu Leonardi Arretini*, in Leonardo Brunni, *Epistolarum libri VIII, recensente Laurentio Mehus (1741)*, ed. James Hankins, 2 vols. (Rome, 2007), vol. I, pp. cxv–cxxvi. Funeral anthology: for the anthology dedicated to the humanist patron Cosimo de’ Medici, see Alison

histories of humanism were even written.⁴ Literary self-reflection seems to have been as automatic as it was unceasing in the humanist community.

This book is concerned with that self-reflection and the self-conception of Italian Renaissance humanists embodied therein. By self-conception is intended specifically what humanists thought they were doing *qua* humanists, what they thought the goals of their movement were, what cultural significance it had for them, and how they viewed their common history. The broad aim of this study is to reconsider the nature of humanism without recourse to theoretical or philosophical categories, especially those extraneous to the time period or not identified as relevant by the historical actors themselves. On the contrary, the point is to take humanists on their own terms and thereby to restore as much as possible of the spirit of their movement to the body that has been so thoroughly dissected on the historian's examination table. This approach is motivated by a desire to give humanists, for the first time in a modern historical monograph, the chance to explain themselves, and thereby to contribute to the necessary project of redefining our understanding of Italian Renaissance humanism.

I say necessary because no broad study has yet been undertaken into what humanists thought humanism was. And yet it is a commonplace of historical method that any object of inquiry must first be understood on its own terms before it can be understood on ours.⁵ Without concern for this fundamental insight, since World War II scholars have cast humanists as republican ideologues, educational and moral reformers, philosophers and legislators of social norms, devotees of a stylistic ideal, lovers of eloquence,

Brown, "The Humanist Portrait of Cosimo de' Medici, Pater Patriae," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 24 (1961), pp. 186–221. Verse compilation: *Lacrimae amicorum* in memory of Celso Mellini, on which see Stefano Benedetti, *Ex perfecta antiquorum eloquentia: oratoria e poesia a Roma nel primo Cinquecento* (Rome, 2010), pp. 133–160; Francesco Arsilli, *De poetis urbanis*, in *Coryciana*, ed. Jozef Ijsewijn (Rome, 1997), pp. 341–559, on which see Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, "Francesco Arsilli e i 'poeti urbani,'" in Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli (ed.), *L'umana compagnia: studi in onore di Gennaro Savarese* (Rome, 1999), pp. 27–35. Dialogues: Lapo da Castiglionchio's *De curiae commodis*, in Christopher S. Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia: Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger's De curiae commodis* (Ann Arbor, 1999); Angelo Camillo Decembrio, *De politia litteraria*, ed. Norbert Witten (Munich, 2002). Another formal source was laudatory poems in praise of a given city's great humanists, e.g., Virgilio Zavarise's poem commemorating the humanists of Verona, in G. Banterle, "Il carme di Virgilio Zavarise *cum enumeratione poetarum oratorumque veronensium*," *Atti e memorie dell'Accademia di Agricoltura, Scienze, e Lettere di Verona*, s. VI, 26 (1974–1975), pp. 121–170. For further types of sources and examples, see Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, "Presenze eterodosse in cataloghi di letterati della prima metà del Cinquecento," in Vincenzo De Caprio and Concetta Ranieri (eds.), *Presenze eterodosse nel viterbese tra Quattro e Cinquecento: Atti del convegno internazionale, Viterbo, 2–3 dicembre 1996* (Rome, 2000), pp. 105–121.

⁴ See the sources reviewed below, pp. 15–20.

⁵ Cf., e.g., Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory*, 8 (1969), pp. 3–53, at 28–30.

and a professional movement of *novi homines* attached to the disciplines that comprised the *studia humanitatis*.⁶ Most of these views are indebted at least as much to modern concerns as they are to contemporary sources. On the other hand, under the spell of Paul Oskar Kristeller's powerful and influential – and ostensibly non-ideological – interpretation, humanism has gradually lost any convincing *raison d'être* beyond the universal motivations of careerism and financial gain. The upshot is a Lilliputian view in which the comprehensibility of humanism decreases the more closely the magnifying glass is applied to its features; and much as happened to Gulliver when perched upon a Brobdingnagian bosom, microscopic familiarity has bred contempt.⁷

Paying attention to what humanists thought was important about what they were doing can correct our perspective in two indispensable ways. First, it pushes essential characteristics of humanism to the fore, that is, those traits and activities that humanists themselves discerned as central to their identity, those by which they recognized each other and which served to distinguish them as humanists in the eyes of others.⁸ Second, it connects those characteristics to cultural aspirations and ideals that make humanism comprehensible as a widespread movement, a movement, furthermore, in which many individuals took pride in taking part or with which they expressly sought to identify themselves. The first insight will help us to understand better what humanism was, the second for what purpose it existed. And with this information we can then retrieve not only the magnificent sense of importance humanists enjoyed about themselves, but also the gigantic significance humanism had in its own day

⁶ Syntheses of past interpretations of humanism and scholarly currents can be found in: Angelo Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism* (Leiden, 2006); Riccardo Fubini, *L'umanesimo italiano e i suoi storici: origini rinascimentali – critica moderna* (Milan, 2001), esp. Part III: "L'Umanesimo e il Rinascimento nella storiografia moderna" (pp. 209–336); William Caferro, *Contesting the Renaissance* (Malden, Mass., 2011), ch. 4: "Humanism: Renovation or Innovation? Transmission or Reception?" (pp. 98–125); Paul F. Grendler, "The Italian Renaissance in the Past Seventy Years: Humanism, Social History, and Early Modern in Anglo-American and Italian Scholarship," in Allen J. Grieco, Michael Roche, and Fiorella Gioffredi Superbi (eds.), *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century. Acts of an International Conference, Florence, Villa I Tatti, June 9–11, 1999* (Florence, 2002), pp. 3–23; and, for scholarship since the year 2000, Mark Jurđević, "Hedgehogs and Foxes: The Present and Future of Italian Renaissance Intellectual History," *Past and Present*, 195:1 (2007), pp. 241–268.

⁷ See Kenneth Gouwens, "Perceiving the Past: Renaissance Humanism after the 'Cognitive Turn,'" *The American Historical Review*, 103 (1998), pp. 55–82, at 57: "an entire generation of social historians has practically written humanism out of its narrative of the Renaissance." Cf. Eckhard Kefler, "Renaissance Humanism: The Rhetorical Turn," in Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 181–197, at 181–183.

⁸ Cf. Christopher S. Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance: Humanists, Historians, and Latin's Legacy* (Baltimore, 2004), p. 119.

and in subsequent history. If Quattrocento humanists were first and foremost rhetoricians, if they were determined to revive classical Latin in their time, if they cherished the beauty of eloquence – petty concerns from the modern standpoint, esoteric if not elitist and thus considered of little importance for broad cultural trends – we must wonder why the humanist program captivated contemporaries and generations, indeed centuries, to come and managed enduringly to transform European culture. As this study argues, it is because language was insolubly linked for humanists with broader cultural conditions and ideals, and in a way that is inverse to our understanding of the mechanisms of civilization. Whereas we tend to view cultural excellence as the product of social stability, economic prosperity, political power, and military might, the humanists believed it to be the premise to these latter conditions. The remedy for Italy's social, political, and military ills, they reasoned, was cultural refinement. And there was no greater refinement than linguistic refinement. As they saw it, reviving the glory of ancient Latin language and literature was the path to reviving the strength, the excellence, the greatness of Roman antiquity. From this perspective, humanism emerges as an elixir, a strategy for renewing civilization via the literature that stood as the greatest testament to the possibility of civilization itself.

* * *

The sources for humanist self-conception have barely been tapped for their invaluable evidence, and they have been largely ignored in recent work.⁹ They received the most sustained attention in the nineteenth century. Georg Voigt drew substantially from the humanists' claims about their own movement, especially as found in letters and literary dedications, in his magnum opus, whose title plainly states his understanding of humanism:

⁹ A related question, that of the humanist conception of the Renaissance, received a great deal of attention in the 1930s and 1940s, and some of those studies inevitably drew on a smattering of the sources alluded to above. See, e.g., Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought: Five Centuries of Interpretation* (Boston, 1948), esp. ch. 1: "The Early Humanist Tradition in Italy," who provides ample bibliography of previous studies in nn. 2 and 3 on p. 2; Franco Simone, "La coscienza della Rinascita negli umanisti," *La Rinascita*, 2 (1939), pp. 838–871 and 3 (1940), pp. 163–186; Herbert Weisinger, "Who Began the Revival of Learning? The Renaissance Point of View," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 30 (1945), pp. 625–638; Weisinger, "Renaissance Theories of the Revival of the Fine Arts," *Italica*, 20:4 (1943), pp. 163–170; and Weisinger, "The Self-Awareness of the Renaissance as a Criterion of the Renaissance," *Papers of the Michigan Academy of Science, Arts and Letters*, 29 (1944), pp. 561–567. These studies, especially those of Ferguson and Weisinger, as well as the earlier approach of Konrad Burdach (see Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, p. 2, n. 3), would later be criticized in Eugenio Garin, *Rinascite e rivoluzioni: Movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo*, new ed. (Rome, 2007), ch. 1: "Età buie e rinascita: un problema di confini."

Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums, oder, Das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus (*The Revival of Classical Antiquity, or The First Century of Humanism*, 1859/1893).¹⁰ Attention to humanists' explicit claims is also manifest in the canonical interpretation of humanism bequeathed from the nineteenth century, Jacob Burckhardt's *Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (1860).¹¹ Burckhardt was heavily influenced by the biography of the humanist Leon Battista Alberti, subsequently considered by scholars a deceptive autobiography, which celebrated the perfection of the ideal individual. Although only one of many sources and pieces of evidence that underlie *Civilization*, it was instrumental for Burckhardt's conception of humanism as a distinctly modern culture of individualistic liberation from the intellectual and spiritual straitjacket of the Middle Ages.¹²

Historiographical currents in the twentieth century took decidedly less interest in humanist accounts of humanism. These played no perceptible role in the major challenges to Burckhardt's vision, which came in the 1950s first at the hands of two German scholars, both émigrés who found their permanent homes in American academic institutions: Hans Baron and Paul Oskar Kristeller. Baron formulated his theory of civic humanism by focusing his attention on Florence at the turn of the fifteenth century, which at that time found itself menaced by the expansion of Milanese tyranny.¹³ Baron's close reading of polemics and other texts of that period convinced him that the renescent passion ignited by Petrarch for classical literature

¹⁰ Georg Voigt, *Die Wiederbelebung des classischen Alterthums, oder, Das erste Jahrhundert des Humanismus*, 3rd ed. (Berlin, 1893). Although first published in 1859, the third edition of 1893 is the definitive version in German; there is also an important Italian translation with an introduction by Eugenio Garin and many additions to the notes: *Il Risorgimento dell'antichità classica, ovvero il primo secolo d'Umanesimo*, tr. D. Valbusa, facsimile reprint ed. Eugenio Garin (Florence, 1968). On the much neglected Voigt see Paul F. Grendler, "Georg Voigt: Historian of Humanism," in Christopher S. Celenza and Kenneth Gouwens (eds.), *Humanism and Creativity in the Renaissance: Essays in Honor of Ronald G. Witt* (Leiden, 2006), pp. 295–325.

¹¹ First published Jacob Burckhardt, *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien: Ein Versuch* (Basel, 1860). A standard English translation is *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, tr. S.G.C. Middlemore (New York, 2002). For a resume of Burckhardt's view of humanism and of the major scholarly reactions to it, see Robert Black, "Humanism," in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. VII: c. 1415–c. 1500, ed. C.T. Allmand (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 243–277, at 243–252.

¹² Anthony Grafton, *Leon Battista Alberti: Master Builder of the Italian Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), pp. 14–18. Grafton also notes that Burckhardt drew his inspiration for *Civilization* from Vespasiano da Bisticci's *Vite*, and that he carefully studied Vasari's *Vite* and Giovio's *Elogia* in his "search for the ideal type of the Renaissance man" (p. 17). Important considerations on Burckhardt's use of the Alberti (auto)biography are also found in Karl A.E. Enenkel, *Die Erfindung des Menschen. Die Autobiographik des frühneuzeitlichen Humanismus von Petrarca bis Lipsius* (Berlin, 2008), pp. 189–228; Enenkel argues that the Alberti *vita* is not an autobiography but rather a biography by Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger.

¹³ Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny* (Princeton, 1955).

and eloquent Latin had become fused with the intellectual defense of the republican commune against the growing trend towards signory in Italy. Although long influential, Baron's idealistic view has now been reduced to a more grounded interpretation both of Renaissance republicanism and of humanism's relationship to it;¹⁴ nonetheless the concept of *umanesimo civile* still holds sway in Italian scholarship.¹⁵ Kristeller, on the other hand, based his interpretation not so much on a thorough reading of a selection of texts as on his magisterial view of the whole corpus of humanist literature. He concluded that Italian humanism was a rhetorical and literary movement, steeped in the (especially Latin) classical tradition, that took shape in a professional class of notaries, teachers, secretaries, and diplomats. In his view, humanism lacked any coherent civic ideology, was generally devoid of sophisticated philosophical content, and was basically equivalent to the *studia humanitatis*, the cycle of disciplines comprised of grammar, rhetoric, poetry, history, and moral philosophy.¹⁶ Contemporaneously with

¹⁴ James Hankins, "The 'Baron Thesis' after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56:2 (1995), pp. 309–338; Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism: Reappraisals and Reflections* (Cambridge, 2000); Kay Schiller, *Gelehrte Gegenwelten: Über humanistische Leibbilder im 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt, 2000) [an earlier English version is "Hans Baron's Humanism," *Storia della storiografia*, 34 (1998), pp. 51–99]; the *AHR Forum* devoted to Baron in *The American Historical Review*, 101:1 (1996), pp. 107–144 (contributions by Ronald G. Witt, "Introduction: Hans Baron's Humanism," pp. 107–109; Witt, "The Crisis after Forty Years," pp. 110–118; John M. Najemy, "Baron's Machiavelli and Renaissance Republicanism," pp. 119–129; Craig Kallendorf, "The Historical Petrarch," pp. 130–141; and Werner Gundersheimer, "Hans Baron's Renaissance Humanism: A Comment," pp. 142–144); Riccardo Fubini, "Renaissance Historian: The Career of Hans Baron," *Journal of Modern History*, 64:3 (1992), pp. 541–574, esp. 569–574; Albert Rabil, Jr., "The Significance of 'Civic Humanism' in the Interpretation of the Italian Renaissance," in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1988), vol. I, pp. 141–174. For the outright rejection of Baron's thesis, see Robert Black's review of Hankins (ed.), *Renaissance Civic Humanism*, in *The English Historical Review*, 116:467 (2001), pp. 715–716.

¹⁵ Especially through the writings of Eugenio Garin. See, e.g., his *L'umanesimo italiano: filosofia e vita civile nel Rinascimento* (Rome, 1952/1993) [originally published as *Der italienische Humanismus* (Bern, 1947)], esp. ch. 2: "La vita civile," pp. 47–93. In his "Nota bibliografica," Garin writes, "Fra le opere d'insieme, che hanno riprospettato con originalità di indagini e di materiali i problemi di cui si tocca in questo libro, sono da porsi in primo luogo le opere di H. Baron" (p. 257). And in his "Avvertenza all'edizione 1994," Garin writes, "Può darsi che talora certe ipotesi ci prendessero la mano. Ma c'era non poco di vero in molte tesi sull'umanesimo civile che fra gli anni Trenta a Quaranta cominciarono ad affacciarsi, e non solo nei primi saggi di Hans Baron e miei, ma in testi di Chabod e di Nino Valeri" (p. xvii), adding in a related note, "Lo stesso Baron ebbe a ricordare come già nel '41 io sottolineassi l'interesse delle sue idee e come certe nostre linee di ricerca si fossero incontrate molto presto" (n. 10).

¹⁶ A good synthesis of Kristeller's view can be found in his *Renaissance Thought and its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York, 1979). It is also represented richly and manifoldly in his collection *Studies in Renaissance Thought and Letters*, 4 vols. (Rome, 1956–1996). On Kristeller's view of humanism, see John Monfasani, "Toward the Genesis of the Kristeller Thesis of Renaissance Humanism: Four Bibliographical Notes," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 53:4 (2000), pp. 1156–1173; see also

Kristeller, the Italian scholar Eugenio Garin developed a contrary view of humanism, one very much descended from Burckhardt.¹⁷ The two parted ways at their respective conceptions of philosophy, which Kristeller understood as a rigorous, systematic investigation of truth within a restricted range of topics. Garin, on the other hand, had a broader understanding of what constituted philosophy. He concentrated his work especially on the close reading of literary texts, drawing out of them their authors' philosophies of life and general worldviews.¹⁸ Thus he considered humanism to be a fundamentally philosophical movement, and one generative of important new conceptions of man, of religion, and of social relations – a movement of thought with certain common themes, analogous to the Enlightenment. Garin also identified humanism with the general intellectual culture of the Renaissance period as a whole, tending to broaden the concept precisely where Kristeller narrowed it.¹⁹

the recent publication of essays on Kristeller and the influence of his thought, John Monfasani (ed.), *Kristeller Reconsidered: Essays on his Life and Scholarship* (New York, 2006).

- ¹⁷ Garin articulated his position many times in diverse studies. Representative texts are his *L'umanesimo italiano e Medioevo e rinascimento: studi e ricerche* (Rome, 1954/2005). On Garin, see Michele Ciliberto, *Eugenio Garin. Un intellettuale nel Novecento* (Rome, 2011); Ciliberto, "Una meditazione sulla condizione umana. Eugenio Garin interprete del Rinascimento," *Rivista di storia della filosofia*, 63:4 (2008), pp. 653–692; Olivia Catanorchi and Valentina Lepri (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo. Atti del convegno, Firenze, 6–8 marzo 2009* (Rome, 2011); Claudio Cesa, "Momenti della formazione di uno storico della filosofia (1929–1947)," in Felicità Audisio and Alessandro Savorelli (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Il percorso storiografico di un maestro del Novecento* (Florence, 2003), pp. 15–34; Massimiliano Capati, *Cantimori, Contini, Garin: crisi di una cultura idealistica* (Bologna, 1997); Franco Cambi (ed.), *Tra scienza e storia: percorsi del neostoricismo italiano: Eugenio Garin, Paolo Rossi, Sergio Moravio* (Milan, 1992); Black, "Humanism," pp. 245–246.
- ¹⁸ Garin explained the difference between the two over philosophy in the autobiographical essay attached to the new edition of his *La filosofia come sapere storico: con un saggio autobiografico* (Rome, 1990), pp. 146–147; this public statement substantially reproduces what he says in a personal letter to Kristeller of September 25, 1953 (see James Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," cited below, who demonstrates the connection between the two writings). See also Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*, ch. 2: "Italian Renaissance Humanism in the Twentieth Century: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," pp. 16–57; James Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller: Existentialism, Neo-Kantianism, and the Post-War Interpretation of Renaissance Humanism," in Catanorchi and Lepri (eds.), *Eugenio Garin. Dal Rinascimento all'Illuminismo*, pp. 481–505; Hankins, "Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil," in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. 1, pp. 591–615, at 604–615 [originally published in *The Italian Renaissance in the Twentieth Century. Proceedings of a conference held at the Villa I Tatti, June 9–11, 1999* (Florence, 2002), pp. 265–289]; and Hankins, "Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters of Renaissance Humanism: Eugenio Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller," in Hankins, *Humanism and Platonism*, vol. 1, pp. 573–590 [originally published in *Comparative Criticism*, 23 (2001), pp. 3–19].
- ¹⁹ An example is his *Rinascite e rivoluzioni*, ch. 1: "Età buie e rinascita: un problema di confini," where the thought of fifteenth-century humanists like Brunni and Valla is joined with the revolutionary stance of Cola di Rienzo, on the one hand, and early Enlightenment figures, on the other. Kristeller articulated this major difference between his approach and Garin's in a letter to Garin dated September 21, 1953 (Pisa, Scuola Normale Superiore, Fondo Garin): "Quando concludi dalla mia asserzione che gli umanisti italiani non furono filosofi (e penso al Poggio, al Guarino, a Pio II, al

The result has tended to be a broad and unsatisfying split between Italian and Anglo-American scholarship.²⁰ The former, following Garin and concentrating on what seem to be representative writings, such as histories, educational treatises, or works of political or moral philosophy, conceives of humanism as an essentially ideological phenomenon growing out of a reaction against medieval culture.²¹ The latter, taking its cue from Kristeller, emphasizes continuity with the Middle Ages and has tried to penetrate to the deeper meaning of humanism by way of the activities and especially the professional interests of its participants.²² This interpretive bifurcation is especially evident in related fields of Renaissance scholarship, such as political, economic, social, or art history, where the focus is not on humanism itself but in which some understanding of humanism is nevertheless deemed necessary for the topic under discussion. In such cases, Italian scholars are generally content to rely on Garin, Anglophones to fall back on Kristeller. And no wonder, as both their interpretations are eminently useful, broadly inclusive, and pliable enough to admit of all kinds of research within their explanatory boundaries.

And yet, despite their clear advantages over the paradigms of Burckhardt and Baron, neither of these interpretations can claim to be definitive. The strength of Garin's understanding is that it places humanism within an intelligible intellectual and cultural context in European history; its weakness is that it has great difficulty identifying the various aspects that make up a humanist profile. It is strong on *why*, weak on *what*. The opposite is the case for Kristeller, who developed his view largely in reaction to other schools of thought he saw as too preoccupied with the coming of modernity

Filelfo ecc., ma non al Ficino o al Pico) che io rifiuto qualsiasi significato filosofico al Rinascimento, non fai altro che identificare umanesimo e rinascimento, cioè mi attribuisci quell'uso di parole che tu veramente segui nel tuo volume sull'umanesimo."

²⁰ Although certain currents of scholarship are attempting to bridge the divide. See, e.g., James Hankins, "Machiavelli, Civic Humanism, and the Humanist Politics of Virtue," *Italian Culture*, 32:2 (2014), pp. 98–109; Hankins, "Exclusivist Republicanism and the Non-Monarchical Republic," *Political Theory*, 38 (2010), pp. 452–482; Christopher S. Celenza, "The Platonic Revival," in James Hankins (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 72–96; Celenza, "Lorenzo Valla and the Traditions and Transmissions of Philosophy," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 66 (2005), pp. 483–506; Celenza, "Petrarch, Latin, and Italian Renaissance Latinity," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 35 (2005), pp. 509–536. The present study is also undertaken in this conciliatory spirit.

²¹ An important recent example is Luca D'Ascia, "Coscienza della Rinascita e coscienza antibarbara. Appunti sulla visione storica del Rinascimento nei secoli XV e XVI," in Renzo Ragghianti and Alessandro Savorelli (eds.), *Rinascimento mito e concetto* (Pisa, 2005), pp. 1–37.

²² Evidence of Kristeller's ascendancy is the canonization of his view in the *New Cambridge Medieval History*: Black, "Humanism," as well as in the three-volume synthesis of humanism edited by Albert Rabil, Jr., *Renaissance Humanism: Foundations, Forms, and Legacy* (Philadelphia, 1988).

and with reigning ideological controversies – Burckhardt with liberalism, Baron with republicanism and the civic applicability of *Bildung*, and Garin with modern science, the Enlightenment, and the Gramscian notion of organic philosophers – rather than with the phenomenon itself.²³ To be sure, Kristeller's view of humanism was also shaped by ideological battles of the twentieth century.²⁴ But where others (like Baron and Garin) cleaved to one side or another, Kristeller tried to purge humanism of all ideological overtones according to the model of scientific research (*Wissenschaft*).²⁵ Wanting to describe humanism in the least tendentious and most value-free way possible, he reduced it to the barest facts he could. The result is an interpretation surely sound in its component parts but that lacks a convincing rationale. Kristeller can reliably tell us about many of humanism's salient characteristics, but he cannot tell us about one of the most, if not *the* most, important: for what purpose did humanism come about, i.e., what did humanists strive for?²⁶ What sense does a professional movement guided by the revived *studia humanitatis* make in the larger context of European history? Why did anyone want to be a humanist, especially in its earlier stages when it held no widespread social or economic advantage? At stake is the *telos*, the final cause, of humanism.²⁷

An attempt has been made to answer this question by focusing on humanists in their role as educators.²⁸ Heavily influenced by his reading of humanist educational treatises, Paul Grendler described humanism as an educational ethos dedicated to instilling virtue in students by way of reading the great literary works of the ancients.²⁹ Grendler was responding in part

²³ On Burckhardt, see Lionel Gossman, *Basel in the Age of Burckhardt: A Study in Unseasonable Ideas* (Chicago, 2000), Part III: "Jacob Burckhardt," pp. 201–346; on Baron, see Fubini, "Renaissance Historian"; Schiller, *Gelehrte Gegenwelten*; and Schiller, "Made 'fit for America': The Renaissance Historian Hans Baron in London Exile 1936–38," in Stefan Berger, Peter Lambert, and Peter Schumann (eds.), *Historikerdialoge. Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch 1750–2000* (Göttingen, 2003), pp. 345–359; on Garin, see Ciliberto, "Una meditazione"; Cesa, "Momenti della formazione"; and Hankins, "Garin and Paul Oskar Kristeller."

²⁴ See Hankins, "Two Twentieth-Century Interpreters," esp. pp. 581–586.

²⁵ See Hankins, "Renaissance Philosophy between God and the Devil," pp. 611–612.

²⁶ Kristeller's evident lack of interest in the causes of humanism has been pointed out by Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovato to Bruni* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 3–4.

²⁷ This issue has been insightfully addressed, though not from within the Kristellerian paradigm, by Francisco Rico, *El sueño del humanismo: (De Petrarca a Erasmo)* (Madrid, 1993); and D'Ascia, "Cosienza della Rinascita."

²⁸ The classic study of humanist education, to which all subsequent scholarship has added or responded, is Eugenio Garin, *L'educazione in Europa (1400–1600). Problemi e programmi* (Bari, 1957).

²⁹ Paul F. Grendler, *Schooling in Renaissance Italy: Literacy and Learning, 1300–1600* (Baltimore, 1989). On humanist educational ideals, see *Humanist Educational Treatises*, ed. and tr. Craig Kallendorf

to Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, who in a grand polemic against the usefulness of the modern humanities had impugned their roots in Renaissance humanism.³⁰ Through their examination of texts by marginalized groups such as women, they had deconstructed the humanists' education in virtue and depicted it instead as the self-serving advertisement of a new professional class. In their view, humanist rhetoric about virtue and love of classical literature was little more than hot air aimed at inflating their standing and lifting them into the university posts hitherto held by scholastic theologians. Grendler's work might have seemed a substantial counter-argument, but his attempt at salvaging an ethos for the humanists suffered shortly thereafter from a forceful rebuttal by Robert Black.³¹ Black undermined Grendler's position by comparing the claims of the humanist educational treatises to actual classroom practice, such as he was able to reconstruct it from documentary sources, and by revealing a widespread misunderstanding about the supposed similarity between the subjects proper to grammar-school and university-level education. From his research into grammar education in Tuscany, Black concludes that virtue played no part in the humanist classroom.

Another noteworthy attempt has been made to endow humanism with an intelligible rationale, this one disavowing the explanatory power Kristeller attributed to the professional context. In an important article Hanna Gray distilled the essence of humanism down to what she called the "pursuit of eloquence."³² Taking issue with Kristeller, she wrote:

To say that the humanists merely introduced a more classical tone into a fixed series of activities does not indicate why it appeared so essential to them to return to the classical models of the *studia humanitatis*, or why they failed to recognize, indeed disclaimed, continuity with medieval practice. To suggest that their attitudes are explicable in terms of their professional

(Cambridge, Mass., 2002), with Kallendorf's introduction. Cf. Paul F. Gehl, *A Moral Art: Grammar, Society, and Culture in Trecento Florence* (Ithaca, 1993).

³⁰ Anthony Grafton and Lisa Jardine, *From Humanism to the Humanities: Education and the Liberal Arts in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986).

³¹ The debate began in *Journal of the History of Ideas*: Robert Black, "Italian Renaissance Education: Changing Perspectives and Continuing Controversies," 52:2 (1991), pp. 315–334; Paul F. Grendler, "Reply to Robert Black," 52:2 (1991), pp. 335–337; Robert Black, "Reply to Paul Grendler," 52:3 (1991), pp. 519–520. Black has since written two monographs on the topic: *Humanism and Education in Medieval and Renaissance Italy: Tradition and Innovation in Latin Schools from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2001); and *Education and Society in Florentine Tuscany: Teachers, Pupils and Schools, c. 1250 to 1500* (Leiden, 2007). For a recapitulation of Black's view, see Black, "Humanism," pp. 258–262.

³² Hanna H. Gray, "Renaissance Humanism: The Pursuit of Eloquence," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 24 (1963), pp. 497–514.

concerns, which are naturally in competition with those of other professions, does not explain how they articulated those concerns, how and why in a particular age men should have turned to rhetoric and claimed for it a special educational and cultural role.³³

Her view was that the eloquence at the root of the *studia humanitatis* – eloquence understood, that is, as the “harmonious union of wisdom and style” – provided humanists with an antidote to the impotence they perceived in scholasticism and a viable model for pursuing their own, different kind of philosophy.³⁴ More recently, Ronald G. Witt has concurred with Gray’s critique, minimizing the importance of the professional context and arguing that humanists were essentially driven by a stylistic ideal: the imitation of the ancient Latin authors.³⁵ According to his *In the Footsteps of the Ancients*, humanism began as the preoccupation of a few individuals with the imitation of classical Latin poetry, which imitation eventually spread to prose and then was harnessed by Petrarch to a broader cultural program of Christian piety and moral renewal. Through subsequent changes in the persons of Coluccio Salutati and Leonardo Bruni, humanism became institutionalized in chanceries and communal governments and eventually lost its Christian emphasis, although it still represented a valid alternative to the cultural standards inherited from the Middle Ages.

The vast differences between these schools of thought suggest that the definition of humanism is today as open a question as it was when first taken up by modern historiography one and a half centuries ago. What is more, the claims to validity, or at least to thoroughness and universality, of the prevailing interpretations of humanism have recently been challenged by a provocative appeal in the form of Christopher S. Celenza’s essay, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*.³⁶ This work argues that our knowledge of humanism is fatally limited by the field’s general ignorance of the sources, and specifically of humanist literary texts, which for the most part lie

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 500. ³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 498.

³⁵ Witt, *Footsteps*. Witt enunciated the broad contours of this view earlier in his essay “Medieval Italian Culture and the Origins of Humanism as a Stylistic Ideal,” in Rabil (ed.), *Renaissance Humanism*, vol. I, pp. 29–70; and he refined it further in “Kristeller’s Humanists as Heirs of the Medieval Dictatores,” in Mazzocco (ed.), *Interpretations of Renaissance Humanism*, pp. 21–35. Cf. also Kessler, “Renaissance Humanism: The Rhetorical Turn.” For Witt’s view on the deep origins of humanism, see *The Two Latin Cultures and the Foundation of Renaissance Humanism in Medieval Italy* (Cambridge, 2011).

³⁶ Celenza, *The Lost Italian Renaissance*. The validity and timeliness of Celenza’s argument have achieved wide recognition among Renaissance scholars. See the reviews of Michael J.B. Allen in *Renaissance Quarterly*, 58:2 (2005), pp. 576–577; Jurdjevic, “Hedgehogs and Foxes,” esp. pp. 265–266; and Maurizio Campanelli, published electronically on H-Italy, H-Net Reviews, February 2006 (<http://www.net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11391>).

unread in the dust of manuscript repositories and pre-modern editions. In view of the unresolved (and perhaps unresolvable) historiographical dispute between the Kristeller and Garin camps, the reigning uncertainty about humanism's cultural importance, and now of Celenza's critique, the understanding of Italian Renaissance humanism clearly needs an overhaul. Celenza emphasizes that such a reconsideration should not be limited to well-known evidence but should rather prefer the examination of hitherto neglected sources. Within such a framework, which one cannot but agree is highly desirable, a more historicizing and text-driven approach to defining Renaissance humanism must surely put a high priority on bringing to light the great many humanist testimonies specifically of humanism.

The very little work done in this area indicates how fruitful such research can be. In the past fifty-five years two studies have been specifically devoted to the self-conception of the humanists. In 1960, Charles Trinkaus published an article on Bartolomeo della Fonte's inaugural orations at the University of Florence in the 1480s, intending it as a mild corrective to Kristeller's view of humanists as a professional class with little in the way of an ethos and nothing of a philosophy.³⁷ Trinkaus argues that, for della Fonte, humanism, being composed of the five disciplines of the *studia humanitatis* (grammar, rhetoric, history, poetry, moral philosophy) but with a special emphasis on rhetoric, was a particularly humanizing pursuit – i.e., that it was of all pursuits the one most apt to make man more human. Furthermore, it was highly useful in private and civic life, nor was it in any way contrary to religion. Finally, humanism was definitely distinct from philosophy, and the humanist, or rhetorician, not the philosopher, was the highest human type. The orations also iterated several times a history of rhetoric, charting its rise in ancient Greece and Rome, its decline in the wake of the barbarian invasions of the fifth century, and its subsequent reawakening with Petrarch. Based on what he judged to be della Fonte's manifest unoriginality in every area except textual scholarship, Trinkaus concluded that the view of humanism found in the inaugural orations represented not only della Fonte's own opinion but also that of his cultural milieu, and thus that it could be attributed generally to the scholars, the students, and the patrons of humanism in Florence in the last quarter of the fifteenth century. The other scholarly consideration of the self-conception

³⁷ Charles Edward Trinkaus, "A Humanist's Conception of Humanism: The Inaugural Orations of Bartolomeo della Fonte," *Studies in the Renaissance*, 7 (1960), pp. 90–147, at 90–91 and 123–125 for his work's relationship to Kristeller's view of humanism [reprinted in Trinkaus, *The Scope of Renaissance Humanism* (Ann Arbor, 1983), pp. 52–87, but without the appendices and bibliographies of della Fonte].

of the humanists is contained in John M. McManamon's *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism*.³⁸ From his broad consideration of humanist funeral orations throughout the entire fifteenth century and all over Italy, McManamon arrives at very different conclusions about humanism from Trinkaus's. First, the true founder of humanism was not Petrarch but rather the team of Manuel Chrysoloras and Leonardo Bruni. Second, the great accomplishment of humanism was to have resurrected the ancient tradition of *bonae litterae* and the *artes liberales*. There is no talk of making man more human, although humanist education is praised as leading students to virtue.

As Trinkaus's and McManamon's studies indicate, further investigations into humanist accounts of humanism can shed much light on the humanists' sense of their own contribution to the culture of their age, of their relationship to formal philosophy and other disciplines like law and medicine, of their history, founders, and exemplary exponents, of their cultural ideals, of their view of the past, of their hopes for the future, and so on. Yet their example is also indicative of the difficulties inherent in using such sources. For one they can reveal as much contradiction as concord, resulting from a difference not only of authors but more importantly of genre, context, and audience. Although both Trinkaus and McManamon considered ceremonial orations, the former interpreted academic orations intended to defend humanism's value against other disciplines and to encourage a learned and especially a humanist audience (or at least one sympathetic to humanism) in its studies in Florence,³⁹ whereas the latter considered funeral orations intended to console and to honor the values of a civic, non-humanist audience all over Italy. Another, graver problem with such sources is their radical subjectivity. Consider the passages from Bruni's *Memoirs* quoted at the outset. No matter how intimately revealing the text may seem about his decision to learn Greek, his regard for his teacher, and his estimation of his fellow students, Bruni's is still only one lone, albeit authoritative, voice. Taken by itself, it floats tantalizingly in the void. In order for it to do more than enunciate an idiosyncratic view, it must be considered together with similar texts, all of which must ultimately be compared, weighed, and searched for common patterns – surely an admirable goal but also

³⁸ John M. McManamon, S.J., *Funeral Oratory and the Cultural Ideals of Italian Humanism* (Chapel Hill, 1989), ch. 6: "Academic Ideals: 'Perfected in the Arts Appropriate to Humanity'" and ch. 7: "Ethos Enshrined."

³⁹ As Trinkaus notes, the University of Florence was by this time completely dedicated to humanistic subjects, whereas other faculties like law had been relocated to Pisa. See Trinkaus, "A Humanist's Conception," pp. 91–92.

premature, considering the very little work that has been done in this field and the lack even of a detailed overview of the pertinent sources.

* * *

There is a corpus of texts, however, that stands out as being particularly worthy of scrutiny and promising of a broadly representative view: a motley assortment of treatises, biographical collections, and dialogues that provide global accounts of the humanist movement. Apart from the treatises, such works were basically modeled on three ancient bio-historiographical genres popular in the Renaissance: (1) bio-bibliographical registers of works and achievements after the manner of Jerome's *De viris illustribus*; (2) *vita* collections in the tradition of Cornelius Nepos, Plutarch, or Suetonius' *Lives of the Caesars* and *Lives of the Grammarians*; and (3) dialogues modeled on Cicero's *Brutus*. The name of the first of these text types – *De viris illustribus*, or *On Famous Men* – was often eponymously ascribed to all such collective biographical works, and many authors incorporated it, or some modified form of it, into their titles, no matter which specific generic form their work took. Throughout the Middle Ages works of this kind served often, but not exclusively, as vehicles for what we would commonly think of as literary history. Thus Gennadius (ca. 490), Isidore of Seville (ca. 630), and Ildephonsus of Toledo (ca. 660) continued Jerome's work in homonymous writings, whereas Peter the Deacon commemorated members of his monastic community in his *De viris illustribus casinensibus*, Benzo d'Alessandria narrated large spans of history by way of brief biographical entries in his *Chronicon* (ca. 1320), and Boccaccio recorded the exploits of famous women in his *De mulieribus claris* (ca. 1360).⁴⁰

Growing thus out of an ancient (but also a medieval) tradition of celebrating political, religious, and cultural heroes and other great representatives of intellectual and literary traditions, collective biographies in various forms developed in the fifteenth century into a sophisticated

⁴⁰ Gennadius, *Liber de viris inlustribus*, ed. E.C. Richardson (Leipzig, 1896), pp. 57–97; Isidore of Seville, *El De viris illustribus de Isidoro de Sevilla. Estudio y edición crítica*, ed. C. Codoñer Merino (Salamanca, 1964); Ildephonsus of Toledo, *El De viris illustribus de Ildefonso de Toledo. Estudio y edición crítica*, ed. C. Codoñer Merino (Salamanca, 1972); Peter the Deacon, *De viris illustribus casinensibus*, in *PL*, vol. CLXXIII, pp. 1003–1050, with a supplement by Placidus Romanus (pp. 1049–1062) [a modern Italian translation is Pietro Diacono, *De viris illustribus casinensibus*, tr. and ed. G. Sperduti (Cassino, 1995)]; Benzo d'Alessandria, *Il Chronicon di Benzo d'Alessandria e i classici latini all'inizio del XIV secolo: edizione critica del libro XXIV: "De moribus et vita philosophorum"*, ed. M. Petoletti (Milan, 2000); Giovanni Boccaccio, *On Famous Women*, ed. and tr. Virginia Brown (Cambridge, Mass., 2001).

tool for commemorating the pioneers and premier figures of humanism.⁴¹ Some of the biographies can seem schematic, and some appear to be little more than lists, but even these are replete with useful information. In the course of enumerating the activities and works of a range of humanists, each text offers insight into how its humanist author understood the development, essence, and aspirations of the movement in which he himself was a participant. Not all such works set out to narrate the history of humanism per se – indeed, what they have to say about humanism is seldom inscribed in a formal narrative at all – but they are all nevertheless attempts to take stock of humanism as a whole, to give an account of what it was and what it meant. With careful interpretation and the requisite attention paid to the stories the authors wish to tell, we can reconstruct the narrative that lies beneath the surface and thus approach such sources as humanist histories of humanism.⁴²

Among all the sources for humanist self-conception, these biographical collections promise to be the most considered and representative. Discrete biographies and reminiscences in letters, literary dedications, ceremonial orations, and commemorative poetry all abound in useful statements, but these tend to be desultory, incomplete, or panegyric. Collective

⁴¹ See Guglielmo Bottari, “Introduzione,” in Guglielmo da Pastrengo, *De viris illustribus, et, De originibus*, ed. Guglielmo Bottari (Padua, 1991), pp. ix–xciv; Rudolf Blum, “Die Literaturverzeichnung im Altertum und Mittelalter: Versuch einer Geschichte der Biobibliographie von den Anfängen bis zum Beginn der Neuzeit,” *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens*, 24 (1983), coll. 1–256; Manfred Fuhrmann, “Die Geschichte der Literaturgeschichtsschreibung von den Anfängen bis zum 19. Jahrhundert,” in Bernard Cerquiglini and Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht (eds.), *Der Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachhistorie* (Frankfurt am Main, 1983), pp. 49–72; Massimo Miglio, “Biografia e raccolte biografiche nel Quattrocento italiano,” *Atti dell’Accademia delle Scienze dell’Istituto di Bologna* (Classe di Scienze Morali), 63 (1974–1975), pp. 166–199; Rosanna Alhaique Pettinelli, “La critica nell’età umanistica,” in Giorgio Baroni (ed.), *Storia della critica letteraria in Italia* (Turin, 1997), pp. 116–174, at 119–133; Klaus Arnold, “*De viris illustribus*. Aus den Anfängen der humanistischen Literaturgeschichtsschreibung: Johannes Trithemius und andere Schriftstellerkataloge des 15. Jahrhunderts,” *Humanistica lovaniensia*, 42 (1993), pp. 52–70; and Eric Cochrane, *Historians and Historiography in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago, 1981), pp. 393–400.

⁴² I have discussed the nature of such texts and made arguments for considering them proper works of history in three articles: Patrick Baker, “A Labyrinth of Praise and Blame: On the Form and Structure of Marcantonio Sabellico’s *De latinae linguae reparatione*,” in Johannes Helmroth, Albert Schirrmeyer, and Stefan Schlelein (eds.), *Historiographie des Humanismus. Literarische Verfahren, soziale Praxis, geschichtliche Räume* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 209–240; Baker, “Writing History in Cicero’s Shadow,” in Anna Heinze, Albert Schirrmeyer, and Julia Weitbrecht (eds.), *Antikes erzählen. Narrative Transformationen von Antike in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit* (Berlin, 2013), pp. 75–90; and Baker, “Collective Biography as Historiography: The *De viris illustribus* of Bartolomeo Facio,” in Baker (ed.), *Biography, Historiography, and Modes of Philosophizing: The Tradition of Collective Biography in Early Modern Europe* (forthcoming). See also Massimo Miglio, “Biografia e raccolte biografiche nel Quattrocento italiano,” in P. Tuynman, G. C. Kuiper, and E. Kessler (eds.), *Acta conventus neo-latini amstelodamensis. Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Amsterdam, August 19–24, 1973* (Munich, 1979), pp. 775–785.

biographies, on the other hand, are more deliberate, comprehensive, and comparative. This last attribute is of especial importance. Whereas the author of an individual biography or a funeral oration generally erects an oversized monument to his subject, praising him inordinately and attributing to him all manner of accomplishments, the collective biographer must place each individual into a larger cultural landscape. Although the latter's intention is still to praise, he must, like the curator of a museum, take a panoptic view when lining up many *viri illustres* next to one another. When comparison with other figures is easy, obvious, and encouraged, it becomes more difficult for any one person to be praised beyond measure, or at least beyond the measure accorded to all. Finally, in addition to being highly expressive and circumspect, these sources are also likely to be more representative of humanists' sincere self-understanding than those which were generally written for a non-humanist audience and which had the object of defending or selling humanism, such as educational treatises or ceremonial orations. For these accounts of humanism seem to have been written largely for a humanist audience (including patrons who participated meaningfully in humanism), and they contain little of the ideological grandstanding typical of other genres. To adapt Clifford Geertz's famous formulation: these sources are a humanist reading of humanist experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves.⁴³ It is the object of this book to re-evoke that inner narrative.

Humanists began to write global accounts of their movement in the fourth decade of the fifteenth century, in what appears to have been a moment of intense self-awareness. Tendencies in this direction can be detected in Sicco Polenton's *Scriptorium illustrium latinae linguae libri XVIII* (1437), which charts the development of Latin style across the *auctores* of antiquity but also mentions the few who in modern times achieved the old eloquence.⁴⁴ In the next year Lapo da Castiglionchio the Younger published his dialogue *De curiae commodis*, one section of which celebrates the great humanists of the papal curia.⁴⁵ Shortly thereafter, in 1441, the Hellenist Cyriac of Ancona dedicated to Pope Eugenius IV his *Itinerarium*, an epistolary treatise describing his (Cyriac's) travels and especially the

⁴³ Cf. Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," *Daedalus*, 101:1 (1972), pp. 1–37 [reprinted in Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York, 1973)].

⁴⁴ Sicco Polenton, *Scriptorium illustrium latinae linguae libri XVIII*, ed. B.L. Ullman (Rome, 1928). The moderns mentioned include: Albertino Mussato, Lovato dei Lovati, Dante, and Petrarch (pp. 126–139), Giovanni Conversini da Ravenna (p. 166), and Francesco Barbaro (pp. 253 and 465) [as noted in M.L. McLaughlin, "Histories of Literature in the Quattrocento," in P. Hainsworth et al. (eds.), *The Languages of Literature in Renaissance Italy* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 63–80, at 68–69].

⁴⁵ Celenza, *Renaissance Humanism and the Papal Curia*.

humanists he met along the way, their activities, and, in a typical lapse of modesty, their praises of the author.⁴⁶ These sources, however, lack a certain maturity and comprehensiveness. Polenton mentions Italian humanists but gives them very little space in his massive text, Lapo focuses exclusively on humanists employed in the curia, and Cyriac confines himself to humanists of his own acquaintance.

The first to embrace the phenomenon of humanism as a widespread movement, to describe its history, and to give voice specifically to its aspirations or cultural ideals, albeit on a small scale, was the Florentine Giannozzo Manetti. His *Trium illustrium poetarum florentinorum vita* (1440) contains comparative biographies of the Three Crowns of Florence (Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio), depicting all three as full-fledged humanists. Especially when read in light of related treatments of Petrarch, Coluccio Salutati, and Niccolò Niccoli in his coeval *De illustribus longaevis* (1439), and of a section dedicated to humanists in his later *Contra Judaeos et Gentes* (1452–1458), these biographies constitute Manetti's attempt not only to defend the humanist credentials of the Three Crowns but also to attribute to them, especially the latter two, the foundation of a broad cultural movement.⁴⁷ In the mid- to late 1440s Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, then at the episcopal stage of his astonishing Church career, profiled in his *De viris illustribus* the leading men and women of European politics and culture.⁴⁸ Only one humanist, Leonardo Bruni, receives an entry, but the article becomes a history of the humanist movement, starting with Bruni as its greatest exponent and then branching out into his teachers, fellows, and successors. Similarly, Biondo Flavio singles out humanism for special treatment in a famous passage of his *Italia illustrata* (1453), a toponymic and cultural gazetteer of Italy.⁴⁹ This time the occasion arises not with Bruni but with Giovanni da Ravenna, and the historical method is more rigorous: Biondo goes into greater depth, seeks to explain the causes for the evolution and spread of humanism, and clearly differentiates developmental

⁴⁶ Cyriac of Ancona, *Itinerarium*, ed. Lorenzo Mehus (Florentiae: Ex novo Typographio Joannis Pauli Giovannelli ad Insigne Palmae, 1742; facsimile reprint Bologna, 1969). On the dating of the work see Mehus' "Praefatio ad lectorem," pp. xxxiv–xxxvi. According to Mehus (pp. xxxvi–xxxvii): "Multum vero utilitatis ex hoc opusculo percipi potest tum propter praestissimos illius aetatis viros, qui in hoc Itinerario memorantur, tum propter prima illorum studiorum rudimenta, quae nunc ad tantam amplitudinem evecta conspiciuntur."

⁴⁷ The relevant sections of Manetti's works are available in Giannozzo Manetti, *Biographical Writings*, ed. and tr. Stefano U. Baldassarri and Rolf Bagemihl (Cambridge, Mass., 2003).

⁴⁸ Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, *De viris illustribus*, ed. A. Van Heck (Vatican City, 1991).

⁴⁹ Biondo Flavio, *Italy Illuminated*, ed. and tr. Jeffrey A. White (Cambridge, Mass., 2005–). Another edition, already complete, is *Biondo Flavio's Italia Illustrata: Text, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. and tr. Catherine J. Castner, 2 vols. (Binghamton, NY, 2005–2010).

stages. Like Piccolomini's treatment, it is only one small chapter in a much larger text with a broader cultural and geographical purview; nevertheless, Biondo portrays humanism as the cornerstone of Italian culture. A similar emphasis is found in the *De viris illustribus* (1456) of Bartolomeo Facio, a lesser-known Ligurian humanist at the court of Alfonso the Magnificent in Naples.⁵⁰ It, too, catalogues the achievements of great men across several departments of contemporary life and gives humanists absolute priority. The superior importance of humanism is made even clearer by the organization of the work: the humanists come first, and they greatly outnumber the illustrious figures in law, medicine, the visual arts, war, and politics. Finally, at the end of the 1480s, two texts appear, temporally coincidental though hailing from different regions of Italy, that record the history of humanism in dialogues imitating Cicero's *Brutus*. That is, instead of in a synthetic narrative, the great humanists and their accomplishments are reviewed and judged over the course of informal conversation and speeches. These are the first texts dedicated exclusively to humanism and which consider it without reference to any broader intellectual or cultural context. In Rome, Paolo Cortesi, best known for his polemic with Poliziano over imitation and specifically Ciceronianism in Latin style, charts humanism's development according to the recovery of proper Ciceronian language in his *De hominibus doctis* (ca. 1489).⁵¹ Criticism of style also drives the *De latinae linguae reparatione* (ca. 1489) of Marcantonio Sabellico, an important teacher and historian in Venice who has largely been forgotten by modern scholars.⁵² As opposed to Cortesi, however, Sabellico does not use Cicero as his measuring stick, and he offers a different vision of humanism's origins and cultural significance.

Humanist accounts of humanism continue into the sixteenth century, most (in)famously with Erasmus' *Ciceronianus* (1528), yet another imitation of Cicero's *Brutus* and the first writing in the genre to get its author into serious trouble. Erasmus reaped the whirlwind for his unrepentant critique and sometimes downright mockery of too-zealous humanist imitators of Cicero all over Europe but especially in Italy, and he spent the rest of his life soothing egos and ruing the day he had ever published, much less

⁵⁰ Bartolomeo Facio, *De viris illustribus liber*, ed. Laurentius Mehus (Florentiae: Ex typ. Joannis Pauli Giovannelli, 1745) [facsimile reprint in Anita Di Stefano et al. (eds.), *La storiografia umanistica. Convegno internazionale di studi, Messina 22–25 ottobre 1987*, 2 vols. in 3 (Messina, 1992), vol. II, pp. 11–164].

⁵¹ Paolo Cortesi, *De hominibus doctis*, ed. Giacomo Ferrà (Palermo, 1979).

⁵² Marcantonio Sabellico, *De latinae linguae reparatione*, ed. Guglielmo Bottari (Messina, 1999), hereafter referred to as Sabellico, *DLLR*.

composed, his text.⁵³ Other important contributions came in the form of Pierio Valeriano's dialogue *De litteratorum infelicitate* (ca. 1529), Paolo Giovio's dialogue *De viris et feminis aetate nostra florentibus* (1527) and biographical collection *Elogia virorum doctorum* (1546), and Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's dialogue *De poetis nostrorum temporum* (1553).⁵⁴

These sources have not been extensively used by historians of humanism, though they have not been entirely neglected, either.⁵⁵ Enlightenment scholars like Apostolo Zeno and Lorenzo Mehus relied on them to reconstruct the history of humanism and its literature, and, as mentioned above, they were instrumental for Georg Voigt's *Wiederbelebung des classischen*

⁵³ See Betty I. Knot, "Introductory Note" to *Ciceronianus*, in Desiderius Erasmus, *The Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. XXVIII: *Literary and Educational Writings 6*, ed. A.H.T. Levi (Toronto, 1974–2006), pp. 330–334.

⁵⁴ These works are available in the following editions: Desiderius Erasmus, *Dialogus ciceronianus*, ed. Pierre Mesnard, in Erasmus, *Opera Omnia*, ordinis primi tomus secundus (Amsterdam, 1971); Pierio Valeriano, *Pierio Valeriano on the Ill Fortune of Learned Men: A Renaissance Humanist and his World*, ed. and tr. Julia Haig Gaisser (Ann Arbor, 1999); Paolo Giovio, *Notable Men and Women of Our Time*, ed. and tr. Kenneth Gouwens (Cambridge, Mass., 2013); Giovio, *Gli elogi degli uomini illustri, letterati, artisti, uomini d'arme*, ed. Renzo Meregazzi (Rome, 1972); Lilio Gregorio Giraldi, *Due dialoghi sui poeti dei nostri tempi*, ed. Claudia Pandolfi (Ferrara, 1999); and Giraldi, *Modern Poets*, ed. and tr. John N. Grant (Cambridge, Mass., 2011).

In addition to the texts listed in these paragraphs, there are many kindred sources that, however, do not pretend to offer global accounts of the humanist movement. Some are too briefly sketched, such as the catalogue of humanists contained in Jacopo Foresti da Bergamo's universal chronicle *Supplementum Chronicarum*, on which see Achim Krümmel, *Das "Supplementum Chronicarum" des Augustinermonches Jacobus Philippus Foresti von Bergamo. Eine der ältesten Bilderchroniken und ihre Wirkungsgeschichte* (Herzberg, 1992). There are also works devoted to only one city instead of all of Italy, e.g., Virgilio Zavarise's poem commemorating the humanists of Verona, in Banterle, "Il carne"; and the proem to Cristoforo Landino's *Comento sopra la Comedia*, ed. Paolo Procaccioli (Rome, 2001), which considers only Florentines (both works date to the second half of the fifteenth century). Another fascinating source is the biographical collection (ca. 1492) of the Florentine bookseller Vespasiano da Bisticci, who, however, was not himself a humanist (although he surely participated in the world of humanism): Vespasiano da Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Aulo Greco, 2 vols. (Florence, 1970–1976). Another source is Benedetto Accolti's *De praestantia virorum sui aevus*. As Robert Black argues, however, it was a rhetorical showpiece meant to impress its dedicatee, Lorenzo de' Medici, by sustaining an insincere and outlandish position, namely the superiority of modern religion, arms, and philosophy over their ancient counterparts. See Robert Black, "Ancients and Moderns in the Renaissance: Rhetoric and History in Accolti's *Dialogue on the Preeminence of Men of his Own Time*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 43:1 (1982), pp. 3–32. Black has since somewhat modified his view of the dialogue and the issue of Accolti's sincerity, but its general interpretation is still far from certain. See Black, "Benedetto Accolti: A Portrait," in Celenza and Gowens (eds.), *Humanism and Creativity*, pp. 61–83, at 74–82; for a different view of the dialogue, see D'Ascia, "Coscienza della Rinascita," pp. 13–15.

⁵⁵ Until recently most such texts were not even available in modern editions. From Polenton to Giraldi, only the works of Polenton himself, Giovio, and Erasmus were edited until about thirty years ago. A satisfactory text of Giovio's *Elogia* has still not been issued, though; see the "Nota al testo" of the recent Italian translation: Paolo Giovio, *Elogi degli uomini illustri*, ed. Franco Minonzio, tr. Andrea Guasparri and Franco Minonzio (Turin, 2006), pp. lxxxix–xcviii, at lxxxix–xcii. Even more indicative of the neglect these sources have suffered is the fact that Cyriac's *Itinerarium* and Facio's *De viris illustribus* are still available only in facsimile reprints of unreliable eighteenth-century editions.

Alterthums.⁵⁶ In the twentieth century, Eugenio Garin used Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* to describe the literary ideas of the circle around Pomponio Leto, and Michael Baxandall investigated Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* as part of his larger treatment of the humanist criticism of art.⁵⁷ Furthermore, Biondo Flavio's *Italia illustrata* has often been cited as an important contemporary witness to the development and significance of the humanist movement in the early Quattrocento.⁵⁸ Finally, Erasmus' *Ciceronianus* is a famous text and has received ample attention as part of the cottage industry devoted to its author.⁵⁹ Despite such studies, these texts have rarely been considered as a unit with regard to their central purpose – to portray humanism and to illustrate its larger cultural meaning – and they have never been studied systematically to deepen our understanding of humanism, much less of the humanists' own understanding of themselves.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Zeno used Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* in his *Dissertationi Vossiane* (Venice, 1752–1753) [mentioned in Maria Teresa Graziosi, "Introduzione," in Paolo Cortesi, *De hominibus doctis dialogus* (Rome, 1973), pp. vii–xxxii, at xxxii] and Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione* in his *Deglistorici delle cose veneziane, i quali hanno scritto per pubblico decreto* (Venice, 1718–1722) (mentioned in Guglielmo Bottari, "Introduzione," in Sabellico, *DLLR*, pp. 7–67, at 7, 23, 66). See also de Nichilo, *I viri illustres*, p. 25. Mehus edited Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* (Florence, 1745) and Cyriac of Ancona's *Itinerarium* (Florence, 1742), and his conviction of their usefulness for writing a history of humanism (which he never completed) emerges from his respective letters to the reader.

⁵⁷ Eugenio Garin, "La letteratura degli umanisti," in E. Cecchi and N. Sapegno (eds.), *Storia della letteratura italiana* (Milan, 1965–1969), vol. III (1966), pp. 5–353, at 148 [cited in Giacomo Ferrà, "Introduzione," in Paolo Cortesi, *De hominibus doctis* (Palermo, 1979), p. 39]; Michael Baxandall, "Bartholomeus Facius on Painting: A Fifteenth-Century Manuscript of the *De viris illustribus*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 27 (1964), pp. 90–107, at 90–97, later integrated into Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition, 1350–1450* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 97–111.

⁵⁸ Bibliography available in Gabriella Albanese, "Mehrsprachigkeit und Literaturgeschichte im Renaissancehumanismus," in Christiane Maass and Annett Volmer (eds.), *Mehrsprachigkeit in der Renaissance* (Heidelberg, 2005), pp. 23–56, at 24–25, n. 5, who notes, however, that the relevant passage's "Bedeutung bislang noch nicht adäquat gewürdigt wurde" (p. 24). To Albanese's citations should be added Ottavio Clavuot, "Flavio Biondos *Italia illustrata*: Porträt und historisch-geographische Legitimation der humanistischen Elite Italiens," in Johannes Helmrath, Ulrich Muhlack, and Gerrit Walther (eds.), *Diffusion des Humanismus: Studien zur nationalen Geschichtsschreibung europäischer Humanisten* (Göttingen, 2002), pp. 55–76.

⁵⁹ E.g., Luca D'Ascia, *Erasmus e l'umanesimo romano* (Florence, 1991); G.W. Pigman III, "Imitation and the Renaissance Sense of the Past: The Reception of Erasmus' *Ciceronianus*," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 9 (1979), pp. 155–177; and H.C. Gotoff, "Cicero vs. Ciceronianism in the *Ciceronianus*," *Illinois Classical Studies*, 5 (1980), pp. 163–173.

⁶⁰ Nevertheless, they have several times been recognized as a valuable corpus for doing just that. In their introductions and notes to Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* and Marcantonio Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione*, Giacomo Ferrà and Guglielmo Bottari, respectively, have given attention to humanist accounts of humanism, mentioning or briefly describing many of the works listed above and comparing them to the texts whose editions they crafted. Neither, however, makes any attempt at synthesis. Similarly, Konrad Krautter has placed Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione* in the same tradition, which he understands more narrowly as the tradition of humanist literary history, and has mentioned the desirability of a close comparison with Cortesi's text – a study which has not yet been undertaken; see Konrad Krautter, "Marcus Antonius Sabellicus' Dialog 'De

Considering how truly undiscovered the country of humanist accounts of humanism is, it has seemed appropriate not to try to survey the whole vast landscape of this literature in a pioneering study but rather to take as deep a view as possible within a logically coherent and historically meaningful panorama. This study will therefore be confined to the more comprehensive accounts from the fifteenth century, from Manetti to Sabellico. The reasons for this have mostly to do with developments within humanism, but also partly with the nature of the sources and partly with the history of scholarship. Regarding the starting point, as discussed above, sources of this kind do not appear until the 1430s, and even the texts by Sicco Polenton, Lapo da Castiglionchio, and Cyriac of Ancona lack the comprehensiveness necessary for sustained and relevant comparison with those of Manetti, Piccolomini, Biondo, and so on. The moment of self-awareness crystallized in these latter authors' works provides a logical first bookend.

Moving to the other chronological terminus, the end of the fifteenth century makes a natural boundary for the present study, as the changes that took place during the sixteenth century make it a separate period worthy of study in its own right. First, that is when humanism ceased to be a distinctly Italian phenomenon. Of course, non-Italians, especially Greeks, played a major role in humanism throughout the Quattrocento. But the Greeks generally adapted themselves to the needs of their Italian students, and the inspiration, sources, and training of northern humanists were primarily Italian. By the Cinquecento many leaders of the movement were based north of the Alps, and from the 1490s on humanist grammatical training was firmly planted in schools outside Italy. The majority of the movement's important figures were non-Italians like Erasmus, Thomas More, Guillaume Budé, and Philipp Melanchthon, and the dissemination of humanist writings had undergone a major change: it was now based in international printing centers like Venice and Paris, and later Basel and Lyon. The name of Melanchthon calls to mind a larger historical development that also

latinae linguae reparatione': Bemerkungen zur Struktur humanistischer Literaturgeschichtsschreibung," in P. Tuynman, G.C. Kuiper, and E. Kessler (eds.), *Acta conventus neo-latini amstelodamensis: Proceedings of the Second International Congress of Neo-Latin Studies, Amsterdam 19–24 August 1973* (Munich, 1979), pp. 635–646, esp. 635 and 641. These sources have also formed the basis for related studies in Renaissance culture. In the field of literary criticism, for example, M.L. McLaughlin has used many of them to assemble a theretofore missing history of the criticism of Latin literature in the Quattrocento; see McLaughlin, "Histories of Literature in the Quattrocento"; and McLaughlin, "Humanist Criticism of Latin and Vernacular Prose," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism* (Cambridge, 1989–), vol. 2: *The Middle Ages*, eds. Alastair Minnis and Ian Johnson, pp. 648–665. And more recently, these texts have provided the bulk of the evidence for Gabriella Albanese's study of multilingualism in the Renaissance; see Albanese, "Mehrsprachigkeit."

changed the nature of humanism: the Reformation. The vicissitudes of confessionalization, the Inquisition, and the Index turned humanism in different directions, on the one hand harnessing it to the needs of Protestant education, on the other reshaping it by enforcing stricter standards of orthodoxy. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, there was a linguistic shift. The Quattrocento is for all intents and purposes a Latin century in Italy.⁶¹ The ennobling of the vernacular that began with Dante was largely ignored in humanist culture and would not gain strength again until the age of Lorenzo the Magnificent in Florence, and it would not be the dominant literary language until the sixteenth century.⁶² By limiting ourselves to the major sources of the fifteenth century we can investigate more profoundly the phenomenon of pre-Reformation, Latinate, Italian humanism.

Finally, a focus on the fifteenth century is desirable in light of this study's underlying motivation, namely to supply a neglected point of view from which to re-evaluate our understanding of the nature of humanism. The Baron thesis relies on events and writings from the turn of the century. Kristeller and Garin parted ways especially over the philosophical status of much fifteenth-century literature. The humanist educational treatises span from 1403 to the end of the 1450s. The lion's share of the evidence for the institutional and professional meaning of the *studia humanitatis* also comes from the Quattrocento, as is the case with the sources adduced by Hanna Gray in her critique of Kristeller. Witt's view, admittedly, is more firmly entrenched in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, but it is just as decisively shaped by developments in the fifteenth. This is the period in which the major interpretations of and debates over humanism are most securely anchored, so this is where it will be most profitable to hear what the humanists themselves have to say.

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Chapter 1 considers together Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini's and Bartolomeo Facio's *De viris illustribus* and Biondo Flavio's *Italia illustrata*, as all three

⁶¹ *A secolo senza poesia*, according to a view that discounts humanist Latin literature. See Letizia A. Panizza, "The Quattrocento," in Peter Brand and Lino Pertile (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Italian Literature* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 129–177, at 131; and Martin McLaughlin, "Latin and Vernacular from Dante to the Age of Lorenzo (1321–c. 1500)," in *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism*, vol. 2, pp. 612–625, esp. at 625: "it must be remembered that the defence of the *volgare* in the Quattrocento was proclaimed by only a few lone voices in a generally hostile environment."

⁶² See Angelo Mazzocco, *Linguistic Theories in Dante and the Humanists: Studies of Language and Intellectual History in Late Medieval and Early Renaissance Italy* (Leiden, 1993). But cf. also Mazzocco, "Kristeller and the Italian Vernacular," in Monfasani (ed.), *Kristeller Reconsidered*, pp. 163–181, for a summary and review of Kristeller's important modification of this view.

texts are thematically related and come from roughly the same period. They give a general impression from the 1440s and 1450s of humanism as a movement for the resuscitation of classical, especially Ciceronian, Latin, and the latter two sources also emphasize a more general interest in the arts and culture of classical antiquity. They depict a period of wonder, discovery, recovery of the ancient literary past, and they convey the excitement of individuals who know that they are experiencing (the flourishing of) a revolutionary cultural undertaking in its prime. This chapter provides a kind of baseline, a standard of comparison for other authors and, in light of that comparison, a description of the basic meaning humanism had for a broad group of individuals across Italy in the fifteenth century.

Chapter 2 focuses on Giannozzo Manetti's writings. Although two of them chronologically predate the works of Piccolomini, Biondo, and Facio, their significance will appear more clearly after the discussions of the first chapter. Manetti's writings give special insight into the peculiar way Florentines viewed humanism – a conception that, in light of the other authors considered, turns out not to be as representative of broader trends as the last century of scholarship has led us to expect. Manetti significantly broadens the meaning of the term *studia humanitatis* with respect to the previous authors. To the basic components of Latinity and reverence for antiquity they describe he adds vernacular poetry, a concern for spirituality, and the striving for Christian virtue. Furthermore, he blurs the boundaries between humanism and scholasticism to depict an age of general cultural flourishing. But the most striking aspect of Manetti's humanism is that it is a setting for a kind of lay monasticism, in which a combination of self-abnegation and the study of Latin literature leads to the *beatissima vita*.

Chapters 3 and 4 deal respectively with Paolo Cortesi's *De hominibus doctis* and Marcantonio Sabellico's *De latinae linguae reparatione*, both of which date to the end of the 1480s. Both authors enunciate a triumphant narrative for humanism, portraying their predecessors, as Cicero does in his *Brutus*, as evolutionary stages on the way to the perfection of their own day. For both of them, perfection equals the restoration of classical Latin eloquence.

In Chapter 3 we shall see how Cortesi views humanism as the continuation of an uninterrupted tradition, one that had moved to Greece with the fall of the Western Empire, but now, with the fall of the Eastern Empire to the Ottomans, returned to its home in Italy. Its central project was to restore Latinity to its one-time greatness and purity in Cicero, which Cortesi intimates has happened in Rome in his own day, and for which this very dialogue is perhaps intended as the first sure proof.