

# **A Bibliographical Introduction to the Italian Humanists**

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## Introduction

From the very beginning, Italian humanism has occupied a privileged place in the world of the Renaissance. As recent scholarship has emphasized, the Renaissance emerged rather more gradually than its most famous early proponent wanted to acknowledge, but the idea of a cultural renewal in Italy under the impetus of the classics was clarified and disseminated by Petrarch, who placed himself grandiosely at the center of this process.<sup>1</sup> This renewal was not limited to, but clearly relied on, humanism. What precisely this term meant has proved a vexed question within modern scholarship, with Paul Oskar Kristeller focusing on humanism as an educational reform that was tied to the rhetorical tradition, Hans Baron defining it as a civic movement in which contemporary politics came to be viewed through the prism of the classics, and Eugenio Garin delineating the way in which abstract scholastic thought was replaced by a desire to see individuals within the concrete parameters of their own time and place as a broad philosophy of life.<sup>2</sup> Indeed as the modern discipline of Renaissance studies was born in the generation after World War II, the central role occupied by the Italian humanists was generally recognized. The Renaissance Society of America, for example, began with a noticeable tilt toward this area, and major scholarly projects like the *Iter Italicum* and the *Catalogus Translationum et*

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<sup>1</sup> For a good account of the nuances of what happened here, see Ronald G. Witt, *In the Footsteps of the Ancients: The Origins of Humanism from Lovati to Bruni*, Studies in Medieval and Reformation Thought 74 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> The classic statements of these positions can be found in Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Renaissance Thought and Its Sources*, ed. Michael Mooney (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979); Hans Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance: Civic Humanism and Republican Liberty in an Age of Classicism and Tyranny*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955; revised one-volume edition published in 1966); and Eugenio Garin, *Italian Humanism: Philosophy and Civic Life in the Renaissance*, trans. Peter Munz (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965).

*Commentariorum* grew from the interests and industry of Kristeller,<sup>3</sup> who highlighted the role of the Italian humanists within the Renaissance through several decades of postwar scholarship.

In Renaissance studies, as with scholarship more generally in the humanities, much has changed in the last couple of generations, with intellectual history in general yielding pride of place to social and economic history (at least in the U.S.) and with many scholars preferring the label ‘early modern’ over ‘Renaissance’ in an effort to widen the field of inquiry beyond the intellectual elites who initially defined their age. Yet in spite of these efforts, the Italian humanists continue to exercise a disproportionate influence on scholarship in this period. Major books and collections of essays are still being devoted to the work of Kristeller, Baron, and Garin,<sup>4</sup> which confirms the lasting impact of seminal scholarship in the field, and the study of Italian humanism has found new homes within the academy. Relevant scholarship in both Europe and North America is now as likely to come from specialists in English, classics, and philosophy as from historians and Italianists, and the unexpected rise of the International Association for Neo-Latin Studies,<sup>5</sup> which has almost a thousand members, confirms that the movement launched by Petrarch and his followers is in no danger of disappearing into oblivion. The situation in Italy is paradoxical, but especially interesting: on the one hand, an entire

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Oskar Kristeller, *Iter Italicum: A Finding List of Uncatalogued or Incompletely Catalogued Humanistic Manuscripts of the Renaissance in Italian and Other Libraries*, 7 vols. (London: The Warburg Institute, and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1963–1997; also available online through *Iter: Gateway to the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, <http://www.itergateway.org/> and many libraries, with a CD-ROM version under the direction of Lucinda Floridi, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995). Information about the *Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum* may be found at <http://catalogustranslationum.org/>.

<sup>4</sup> On Kristeller, see John Monfasani, ed., *Kristeller Reconsidered: Essays on His Life and Scholarship* (New York: Italica Press, 2006); on Baron, see James Hankins, “The ‘Baron Thesis’ after Forty Years and Some Recent Studies of Leonardo Bruni,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 56 (1995): 309–338, and Nicholas Scott Baker, Brian Maxson, and Oren J. Margolis, eds., *After Civic Humanism: Learning and Politics in Renaissance Italy*, Essays and Studies 35 (Toronto: Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2015); and on Garin, see Rocco Rubini, *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2014). For an interesting synthesis of where things stand in relation to these three scholars, see Patrick Baker, *Italian Renaissance Humanism in the Mirror*, Ideas in Context 14 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ianls.com/index2.html?top0.html&0:home.html&2>.

generation of researchers is in danger of being marginalized as the crisis in the universities continues to close off traditional academic appointments; but on the other hand, conferences devoted to humanistic studies remain well attended, and books and articles are actually flowing forth at a greater rate than they were a generation ago.

The bibliographies available here have been put together to provide access to scholarship in this field. Each of them is an entry in the Renaissance and Reformation module of *Oxford Bibliographies*.<sup>6</sup> The target audience ranges from advanced undergraduates, through researchers in other fields who suddenly find a need to know something about a key humanist, to advanced specialists who might not need a basic orientation to a particular figure but could still benefit from references to obscure and seldom-cited material. A premium has been placed on items that have often been cited in the secondary literature and that are extensively annotated, as a way to ‘jump start’ research. As the Renaissance and Reformation module grew, it became clear that the number of bibliographies of Italian humanists was growing to reflect their central position in the field, and that they would benefit from being collected into a discrete cluster. Not everyone who has a serious interest in this field has the affiliation with a major research university that can provide access to *Oxford Bibliographies*, and European libraries in particular have problems budgeting on a regular basis for online projects like this that require a sustained commitment over the years.

For a number of reasons, this is a particularly opportune moment to offer a bibliographical introduction in this area. Unlike in the sciences, where an article can become outdated even before it appears in print, and in other areas of the humanities, where sales of and references to many monographs plummet after fifteen or twenty years at most, many seminal works on the Italian humanists were produced years, even decades, ago. Much important

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/browse?module\\_0=obo-9780195399301](http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/browse?module_0=obo-9780195399301).

material was published locally, with important scholarship coming from presses and journals that have never distributed effectively beyond their own region.<sup>7</sup> Electronic databases like WorldCat often lack references to books like these, and for that matter to newer non-Anglophone scholarship from lesser-known outlets as well. Yet while these traditional obstacles to research remain, the electronic resources of the last generation represent a good start on some new solutions. Google Scholar offers a mass of material, although it is poorly organized and much of what turns up in a given search turns out to be irrelevant or repetitive. Useful information on published editions of the works of the Italian humanists can be found in some unlikely places like the *Neulateinische Wortliste*, and massive digitalization projects like those at the Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek offer access to early printed editions when no modern ones exist.<sup>8</sup> Indeed the growth of such sites as Academia.edu<sup>9</sup> and the movement toward open access mean that once an article is located, the odds are now far greater that a copy of it can be found somewhere online than that the researcher will have to resort to traditional, slower methods like interlibrary loan. In short, we are at the point where the resources for locating relevant books and articles appear finally to be outpacing their production, but we are not yet at the point where (for example) a simple Google search will turn everything up.

Those who use the bibliographies available here will undoubtedly notice a number of trends. Scholarship on the Italian Renaissance, at least in the Anglophone world, has long been focused on Florence, with a healthy but still lesser emphasis on Rome and Venice; this is changing, but humanists who worked elsewhere remain underserved. The bias toward major

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<sup>7</sup> For examples, see the bibliography on Pontano at <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780195399301/obo-9780195399301-0207.xml>.

<sup>8</sup> Johann Ramming, [http://www.neulatein.de/neulateinische\\_wortliste.htm](http://www.neulatein.de/neulateinische_wortliste.htm); and Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum, <https://www.digitale-sammlungen.de/>.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.academia.edu/>.

figures like Petrarch and Boccaccio is still there, but it is accompanied by a noticeable growth of interest in humanists like Poliziano and Pontano, although some scholars who were well known and respected in their own day (e.g., Barzizza and Decembrio) are still not getting the attention they deserve. Thanks to the formation of several national commissions organized to bring out the complete works of important authors,<sup>10</sup> there has been an outpouring of critical editions of primary works in Italy, accompanied by the scholarly editions with English translations that have appeared with unexpected rapidity in the I Tatti Renaissance Library.<sup>11</sup> What is needed now, it seems to me, is more synthesis, especially with intellectual biographies for many of the figures who have not received a modern treatment in this genre.

Hopefully the bibliographies presented here will facilitate this and other work in a field where much has been done, but much more still remains to do. Orientation to the field can be found in the general entries that cover humanism and its origins. The bibliographies of individual humanists include most of the major figures. Some sections, like biographies and editions of the works of the humanists, appear in all the entries, but beyond these constants, each bibliography has been organized in accordance with the work that has been done on that particular figure. Viewed as a whole, these bibliographies provide a snapshot of the most influential scholarship that has been produced on a key moment in the development of western intellectual life.

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<sup>10</sup> Information on the various projects underway can be found at [http://www.librari.beniculturali.it/opencms/opencms/it/ednazionali/pagina\\_0001.html](http://www.librari.beniculturali.it/opencms/opencms/it/ednazionali/pagina_0001.html).

<sup>11</sup> A list of volumes that are available at any given moment may be found at <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/collection.php?cpk=1145>.

## Bibliographic Articles on Italian Humanism

The following bibliographic articles will be freely accessible in various groupings, on a rotating basis, on the *Oxford Bibliographies* website. Each article is by Craig Kallendorf unless indicated otherwise in parentheses.

[Humanism](#) (by Paul Grendler)

[The Origins of Humanism](#) (by Ronald G. Witt †)

[Leon Battista Alberti](#) (by David Marsh)

[Ermolao Barbaro the Younger](#)

[Gasparino Barzizza](#)

[Pietro Bembo](#)

[Filippo Beroaldo the Elder](#)

[Cardinal Bessarion](#) (by John Monfasani)

[Flavio Biondo](#) (by Nicoletta Pellegrino)

[Giovanni Boccaccio](#) (by Jason Houston)

[Poggio Bracciolini](#)

[Leonardo Bruni](#)

[Pier Candido Decembrio](#)

[Marsilio Ficino](#)

[Francesco Filelfo](#)

[Guarino da Verona](#)

[Cristoforo Landino](#)

[Giulio Pomponio Leto](#)

[Giannozzo Manetti](#)

[Battista Mantovano](#)

[Aldo Manuzio](#)

[Niccolò Niccoli](#)

[Niccolò Perotti](#)

[Petrarch](#)

[Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini](#)

[Giovanni Pico della Mirandola](#) (by M. V. Dougherty)

[Angelo Poliziano](#)

[Giovanni Giovano Pontano](#)

[Coluccio Salutati](#)

[Ambrogio Traversari](#)

[Pierio Valeriano](#)

[Lorenzo Valla](#)

[Maffeo Vegio](#)

[Pier Paolo Vergerio the Elder](#)