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, Latinity, and Culture: Two Studies on Lorenzo Valla.
The books in this series will discuss the emergence of intellectual traditions and of related new disciplines. The procedures, aims, and vocabularies that were generated will be set in the context of the alternatives available within the contemporary frameworks of ideas and institutions. Through detailed studies of the evolution of such traditions, and their modification by different audiences, it is hoped that a new picture will form of the development of ideas in their concrete contexts. By this means, artificial distinctions between the history of philosophy, of the various sciences, of society and politics, and of literature may be seen to dissolve.

The series is published with the support of the Exxon Foundation.

A list of books in the series will be found at the end of the volume.
For My Parents
## Contents

**Acknowledgments**  \hspace{1cm} page viii

- Introduction  \hspace{1cm} 1
- 1 The renaissance of eloquence  \hspace{1cm} 36
- 2 The scholastic *studia humanitatis* and the hagiography of humanism  \hspace{1cm} 90
- 3 The triumph of Cicero  \hspace{1cm} 133
- 4 Philology, printing, and the perfection of humanism  \hspace{1cm} 184
- 5 Humanism in the mirror  \hspace{1cm} 234

*Appendix. The pantheon of humanism*  \hspace{1cm} 281

*Bibliography*  \hspace{1cm} 291

*Index*  \hspace{1cm} 324
Acknowledgments

This book began in 2004 in the Biblioteca Berenson of Villa I Tatti in Florence, where for one year I had the great privilege of reading freely in the literature of antiquity and the Renaissance. It was in my time there as Reader in Renaissance Studies that I stumbled upon my sources and conceived the study based on them. Therefore my first grazie must go to Joseph Connors, whose lofty vision and determination to offer a graduate student “a year off to read primary sources and think” is what made possible my doctoral dissertation, fully rethought and revised for the present offering. I also owe great thanks to the staff of the Biblioteca Berenson, which for the past decade has consistently supported me in my research, as well as to the rest of the I Tatti staff for the kindness they have always shown to me and my family. Eve Borsook deserves a special mention. If not for her example and encouragement to write “my kind of book,” I might not have done so.

Beyond the generosity of Villa I Tatti, my work has been supported by doctoral fellowships from Harvard University and the Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa. The transformation of a dissertation into a book was substantially assisted by the American Academy in Rome, where I spent the 2012–2013 academic year as the Lily Auchincloss Post-Doctoral Rome Prize Fellow in Renaissance and Early Modern Italian Studies. I would like to take this opportunity to express profound thanks to the Drue Heinz Librarian, Sebastian Hierl. Many aspects of my research have also been facilitated by funding from the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and Sonderforschungsbereich 644 “Transformationen der Antike” at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; the DFG graciously bore the cost of indexing for this volume.

In preparing the manuscript I have received the indispensable assistance of mentors and colleagues. My dissertation committee, composed of James Hankins, Michael McCormick, and Christopher Celenza, was rigorous and relentless in both criticism and generosity, and ultimately in friendship.
Acknowledgments

Christopher Celenza has continued to be a trusted consigliere, helping me to frame my ideas in terms of the questions that are truly worth asking. To my graduate advisor James Hankins I owe an ineffable debt: not only for nurturing my text all these years but for all he has taught me, for his time, for his fellowship, for his humanitas. This book would not have reached its current form without the careful eyes of Kim Bowes, Robert Fredona, Johannes Helmrath, and Anthony Kaldellis, all of whom reviewed various chapters. I am also grateful to Gary Ianziti and Ronald Witt for many discussions and above all for their encouragement, as well as to the anonymous readers at Cambridge University Press for helping to make this book so much better than it was. It is a pleasure, finally, to express boundless gratitude to my many research assistants over the years: Olga Bode, Janis El-Bira, Tobias Enseleit, Christian Faust, Moritz Füser, Pia Kazmierczak, Daniel Müller, Viktoria Overfeld, Ricarda Peters, Lukas Reddemann, and Lisa Schlüter.

Many other individuals have contributed to this project through their friendship, generosity, conversation, and criticism: Niall Atkinson, John Baker, Leonard Barkan, Darcy and Tracy Beyer, the Bietolini family, Harald Brandt, Jason Clower, John Gagné, Günter and Ulla Grote, Nicole Hegener, Erik Heinrichs, Ronny Kaiser, Craig Kallendorf, Brigitte Kammigan-Brandt, Joshua Liberatore, Evan MacCarthy, Elizabeth Mellyn, Carol Nisbet, Fabio Pedron, Angiolo Pergolini, Diego Pirillo, Maike Priesterjahn, Damiano Recchchini, Dominique Kirchner Reill, Albert Schirrmeister, Stefan Schlelein, Patrizia Tanini, and Don Wilcox. Ultimately, nothing would have been possible without the inspiration of my children Sofia and Henny and the support of my wife Katrin.