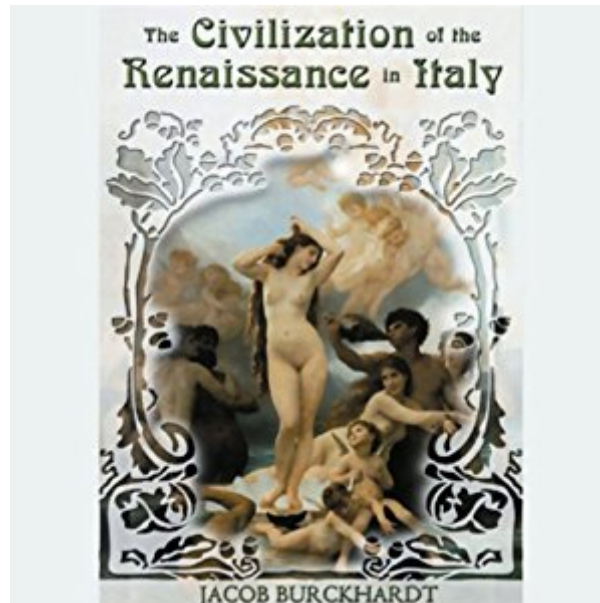


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The Civilization Of The Renaissance In Italy



Synopsis

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Customer Reviews

Burckhardt's 'Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy' is fundamental to our understanding of the Renaissance, even though it has long since ceased to be definitive. For Burckhardt (who wrote 'Civilization' in the 1850s), the Italian Renaissance represented the punctuated end of the middle ages and the beginning of the modern world. He placed particular emphasis on the idea that for the first time in history, the Renaissance gave us "individuality": the idea that a person could separate

themselves from the crowd by their creative genius (in art, politics, science, etc.). Contemporary scholarship, however, takes a more nuanced approach: while Burckhardt did indeed identify in the Renaissance new cultural, political, and artistic trends, it is now argued that the Renaissance nevertheless retained many aspects of medieval civilization while the Italians, and later other Europeans, revived classical art, architecture, and science and created a new economic and political order. Two different publishers of this book each offer introductions by two excellent contemporary historians: the Penguin Classics version is introduced by Peter Burke, and the Random House Modern Library version is introduced by Peter Gay. In the Penguin version (reviewed here) Burke (as elsewhere) argues that the Renaissance was not the clean break with the medieval past that Burckhardt suggests, although he readily acknowledges Burckhardt's foundational contribution to early Renaissance scholarship: "Burckhardt's view of the Renaissance may be easy to criticize, but it is also difficult to replace.

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