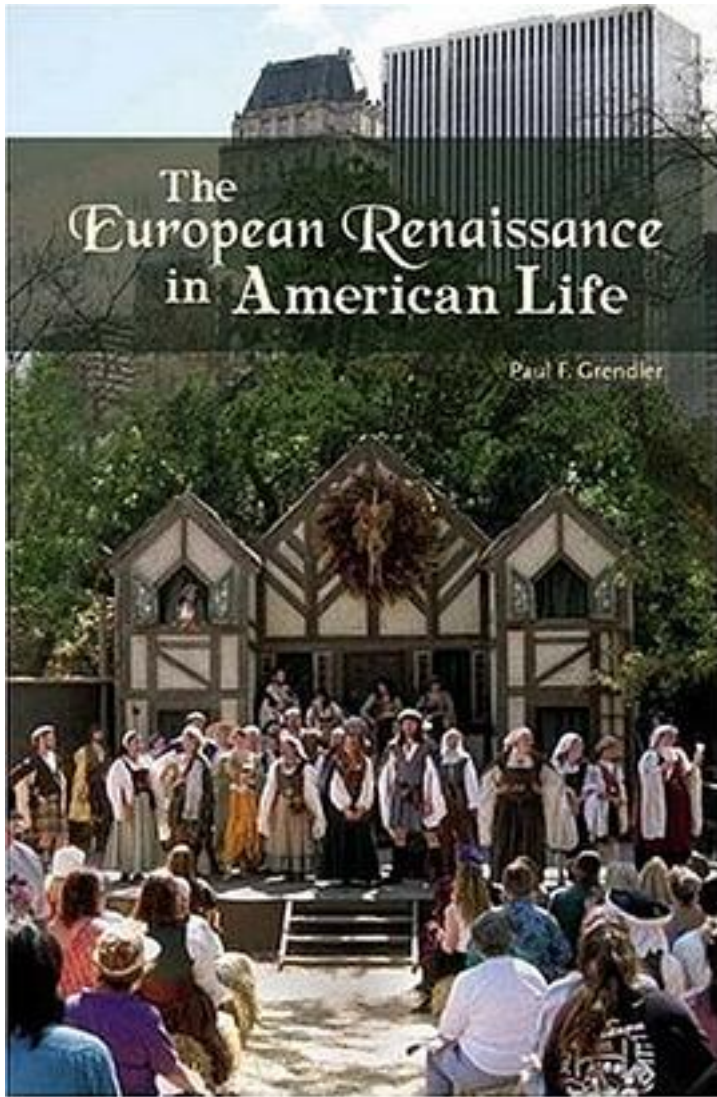


The European Renaissance in American Life



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出版者:Praeger Publishers

出版时间:2006-03-30

装帧:Hardcover

isbn:9780275984861

This book offers an informative, but light-hearted look at the popularity of the Renaissance in 19th- and 20th-century America. While most Americans have only vague notions as to the historical dates and details of the Renaissance (Europe between 1400 and 1600), a large portion find themselves attracted to various ideals, cultural legacies, or other connotations that the term brings to mind. Michelangelo, da Vinci, Shakespeare, and Machiavelli, are omnipresent in modern culture. From the "real" Renaissance, as depicted in literature and film, to renaissance as idea, Grendler explores the kinship that modern Americans feel with the period and the concept. They admire its creativity, beauty, and elegance, in a world that seems to be ever shorter on these qualities. Few historical periods contain so many easily recognized figures, and few historical terms are used so widely in modern culture. Today, Renaissance means rebirth and revival. It implies moving forward or making progress - concepts dear to the American psyche. It means personal hope and expectation. From business names to personal ads, the use of the term is pervasive. Through an exploration of Renaissance Faires, Renaissance Weekends, and the practical application of Renaissance philosophy and ideas to daily life (think Machiavellian scheming, or "renaissance" men and women), Grendler shows how contemporary Americans have embraced the 16th century as a model of culture and sophistication.

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