



Semiotics of Peasants in Transition: Slovene Villagers and Their Ethnic Relatives in America (Sound and Meaning: The Roman Jakobson Series in Linguistics and Poetics)

Irene Portis-Winner

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In *Semiotics of Peasants in Transition* Irene Portis-Winner examines the complexities of ethnic identity in a traditional Slovene village with unique ties to an American city. At once an investigation into a particular anthropological situation and a theoretical exploration of the semiotics of ethnic culture—in this case a culture permeated by transnational influences—*Semiotics of Peasants in Transition* describes the complex relationships that have existed between and among the villagers remaining in Slovenia and those who, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, emigrated to Cleveland, Ohio.

Describing a process of continuous and enduring interaction between these geographically separate communities, Portis-Winner explains how, for instance, financial assistance from the emigrants enabled their Slovenian hometown to survive the economic depressions of the 1890s and 1930s. She also analyzes the extent to which memories, rituals, myths, and traditional activities from Slovenia have sustained their Cleveland relatives. The result is a unique anthropological investigation into the signifying practices of a strongly cohesive—yet geographically split—ethnic group, as well as an illuminating application of semiotic analyses to communities and the complex problems they face.

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