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Sommario/riassunto

Following Tradition is an expansive examination of the history of tradition—"one of the most common as well as most contested terms in English language usage"—in Americans' thinking and discourse about culture. Tradition in use becomes problematic because of "its multiple meanings and its conceptual softness." As a term and a concept, it has been important in the development of all scholarly fields that study American culture. Folklore, history, American studies, anthropology, cultural studies, and others assign different value and meaning to tradition. It is a frequent point of reference in popular discourse concerning everything from politics to lifestyles to sports and entertainment. Politicians and social advocates appeal to it as prima facie evidence of the worth of their causes. Entertainment and other media mass produce it, or at least a facsimile of it. In a society that frequently seeks to reinvent itself, tradition as a cultural anchor to be revered or rejected is an essential, if elusive, concept. Simon Bronner's wide net captures the historical, rhetorical, philosophical, and psychological dimensions of tradition. As he notes, he has written a book "about an American tradition—arguing about it." His elucidation of those arguments makes fascinating and thoughtful reading. An essential text for folklorists, Following Tradition will be a valuable reference as well for historians and anthropologists; students of American studies, popular culture, and cultural studies; and anyone interested in the continuing place of tradition in American culture.
