information on the manner in which the herders were viewed by Dalarna society. Ironically, the main flaw of the book is an aspect that should be one of its major virtues, namely, the numerous photographs, which have not been reproduced well in print. Even so, Brashers' study is valuable, if for no other reason than that it is the most recent work dealing with a farm system which is now, for all practical purposes, history.


Reviewed by Moira Smith.

For a long time, the literature on folk customs was dominated by a preoccupation with origins. Contemporary practices were viewed as moribund survivals of ancient rituals with little intrinsic interest except insofar as they preserved the supposed original forms. In more recent years, folklorists have become interested in customs for their own sake, and produce detailed studies which focus on contemporary rather than past forms. Among studies of mumming traditions, Alex Helm's The English Mummer's Play is more interested in the hypothetical ancient past of the custom than in its present versions. Henry Glassie's All Silver and No Brass, on the other hand, emphasizes careful fieldwork to present a detailed study of a custom in context. This book similarly focuses on the present rather than on the past, and lets the tradition bearers themselves do much of the
talking.

Bendix never suggests any comparison between the Swiss Silvesterklausen and the English mumming customs described by Helm, Glassie, and others, although there are similarities between them. Silvesterklausen, like mumming, involves groups of performers in costumes and disguises who visit houses to entertain the inhabitants in return for gifts of food, drink, or money. Rather than presenting a play, however, the Swiss performers make music with the enormous bells which they wear and sing wordless yodels, or Zauerli. In view of this difference, it would be rash to assume that Silvesterklausen is a form of mumming; in any case, this problem is not a part of Bendix's agenda in this book, which is restricted entirely to the village of Urntlsch and its environs. Within this restricted scope, we are presented with a detailed picture of the custom in its social, economic, and historical context.

Most of the book is devoted to a description of the village and the custom. Bendix conducted fieldwork in the small village of Urntlsch in 1981 and 1982, when the custom was being practiced with vigor and enthusiasm. The custom is described largely from the perspective of the performers themselves. We are shown into their homes, where they painstakingly make their costumes by hand. The performers also wear masks and huge crafted headdresses which depict tableaux such as "Dying Crafts." Finally, there are large, musically tuned cowbells and sleighbells.

Bendix also examines the music itself in some detail, and uses maps to discuss the visiting patterns followed by the groups of performers. The performers do not honor all and sundry with a visit; they prefer to honor fellow community members rather than outsiders, nor do they perform for people who do not appreciate the custom. Among those who do appreciate it are the tourists
who come to Urnäsch every year specifically to view it in local restaurants. These visitors from outside are increasingly important to the village's economy, but the locals themselves, including the performers of Silvesterklausen, are very ambivalent toward them. Bendix comments only briefly on tourism and its influence on the custom, but it would be an interesting problem to study further.

The third chapter discusses the oral and written history of Silvesterklausen in Urnäsch. Before World War I the custom was banned in the village, and condemned as an indecent and shameful form of begging. After the war, however, it was considered worthy of encouragement as one of the things "old, quaint, and Swiss" which a nation should preserve, and since the Second World War it has been continued more vigorously than ever. Bendix's research shows that in the post-war years, the performers altered their style of costume, which used to include old clothes, rags, and chamber pots, and substituted more plant material. Much of the responsibility for this change belongs to a local schoolteacher who promulgated the theory that Silvesterklausen was originally a pagan vegetation rite. Bendix herself finds no evidence for this theory, but it is the explanation most favored by the tradition bearers, who altered their costumes to conform more closely to the "original" form. This is an interesting example of the way in which folklorists' theories can come back to haunt them after they thought they had ditched them long ago.

Finally, the author examines some possible reasons for the continued vigor of Silvesterklausen. She argues that financial gain cannot be a motivating factor in the present form of the custom, in which the cost of the costume greatly exceeds the amount that the performers receive in gifts. Social functions are considered more important: the custom is
shown to reaffirm community ties. Silvester-
klausen is also an expression of Urnäsch
worldview; Bendix's analysis reveals a village
which has become disillusioned with technolog-
ical progress and turned instead to a nostalgic
version of the "traditional old way of life."

All in all, the book is written in a clear
and readable style which is enhanced by the
liberal use of quotations from the performers.
Their voices emphasize the vitality of Silves-
terklausen as more than memory culture or a
pagan survival. By restricting most of the
purely theoretical and scholarly issues to the
notes, Bendix has further increased the book's
accessibility. Some readers may find the
proliferation of Swiss words confusing, but a
detailed glossary helps overcome this drawback.
The photographs are appealing--Silvesterklausen
is undeniably a very photogenic custom--but they
could be integrated more fully into the text,
particularly the description of the various
types of costume. I would recommend this book to
anyone who seeks a thorough study of a living
folk custom, based on good fieldwork, and
raising thought-provoking issues for further
study.

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Ca. $60.00 (SFr. 92.00).

Reviewed by Regina Bendix.

Locating sources on a given topic in the
hundreds of folklore journals printed worldwide
can be one of the most time-consuming tasks in
research. One should be thankful to Peter
Niederhauser (and by extension to a Swiss
pharmaceutical firm which sponsored him--maybe
this will enhance their recently damaged