

a key institution for saving individuals during this difficult period in Soviet history (4).

The book is divided into four parts that explore the birth of the Torgsin (short for the Special Bureau for Trade with Foreigners on the Territory of the USSR) in 1930 through to its demise in 1936. As the name suggests, foreigners with hard currency were the target clients, initially at Soviet seaports, and then at Torgsin department stores offering antiques and other desirable goods. These stores would evolve into sites selling food and consumer goods to Soviet citizens in exchange for their gold, silver, and other valuables, as well as conduits for money transfers from abroad. These transfers constituted big business for the Soviet regime as networks were created to promote such payments. Through these means, the Torgsin became central to the lives of rural Soviet citizens, including Mennonites. Osokina points out the significance of transfers from North America, much of it to help starving relatives in the Soviet Union, demonstrating how the Torgsin took advantage of famine conditions by increasing prices of staples like flour (155). It is an irony that a project that started out to cater to foreigners became essential to the survival of so many ordinary Soviet citizens. Crassly, Torgsin officials believed that international transfers might grow in 1934, banking on support of Ukrainian, Jewish, and German relatives living abroad to continue sending financial support to save their loved ones from starvation. Unfortunately for the Torgsin's future plans, the famine ended.

In popular memory, the Torgsin is intimately associated with famine relief. This book, however, demonstrates its significance for understanding the contradictions of the early Soviet economy, the formation of a Soviet version of consumerism, and the adaptation of everyday Soviet citizens to the realities of Stalinism.

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**Karen M. Johnson-Weiner, *The Lives of Amish Women*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020. Pp. 320. Hardcover, \$52 US.**

Karen Johnson-Weiner's new book presents a rich text that engages with ideas on how changes and adaptations have shifted gender roles. Exploring the role of women in the Amish community is no small task, as the Amish are a diverse group. Johnson-Weiner

describes many differences in gender socialization across affiliations, from the most conservative Swartzentruber groups to the more progressive New Order groups, with examples from across affiliations. She notes that Donald Kraybill and others have defined the Amish as “any group that affirms the tenets outlined in the 1632 Dordrecht Confession of Faith, uses horse-and-buggy transportation, speaks a German dialect, and considers itself Amish” (246). Johnson-Weiner builds on this baseline definition to explore how situational contexts allow a more complex understanding of identity on the part of Amish women.

The agrarian lifestyle of conservative Amish groups provides expectations for how children are socialized. Girls are taught from a young age to follow in the footsteps of their mothers and grandmothers and accept the principle of *Gelassenheit* (submission). Work and leisure are combined into community events that emphasize traditional gender roles and the importance of the church community in daily life. Women in conservative communities read print media focused on community values. The focus on community within conservative groups centralizes the principles of the *Ordnung* in everyday practice. Johnson-Weiner notes that women in conservative groups serve as helpmeets to their husbands and have a voice in household decisions and the larger church community. These communities have strong ties across all members.

As occupations transition away from farming in more progressive Amish groups, there is greater separation across family, work, and the church community. Johnson-Weiner explores how family structure and practices differ across type of men’s work (cottage industries, factories, retail, etc.) and across affiliations, thereby affecting how children are socialized into gender roles. Entrepreneurship can increase the fissure between work and the church community. Family interactions and childrearing practices become even more complex when women work. Johnson-Weiner suggests changes in the relationship across the family, work, leisure time, and church community lessen the power of the *Ordnung* to guide day-to-day behaviours. Women in more progressive groups often consume print media that reinforces (individual) faith rather than the church community. These experiences influence the role of women as helpmeets, as mothers, and as members of the church community.

Johnson-Weiner’s rich analysis of diverse groups of Amish women presents avenues for further exploration. For example, the shift from community gatherings focused on work to community gatherings for fun, or leisure, suggests an alteration in the definition of “community” as traditionally held by the Amish. While

adaptations to non-Amish society are not a new phenomenon amongst the Amish, the conveniences of and negotiations with non-Amish society are constantly changing. The encroachment of non-Amish lifestyle patterns and norms has potential implications for the future of Amish society. Johnson-Weiner notes the husband's role as breadwinner, the increasing prevalence of leisure time and family vacations, the introduction of modern conveniences, and the purchasing of goods and services changes the responsibilities of females and males in the Amish community. One would expect the divide across Amish affiliations will continue to grow as progressive groups accept change and conservative groups hold on to tradition. The impact of this growing separation on interactions across the larger Amish community poses an area for further inquiry.

Johnson-Weiner presents many illustrative examples of traditional practices in conservative groups and changing practices in more progressive groups; however, readers are left with an unclear sense of the prevalence of these activities and groups in current society. For example, one might ask how common the traditional dating practice of bundling is within the larger context of Amish society. Is bundling practiced across all conservative (Swartzentruber) groups? What percentage of the Amish population is comprised of Swartzentruber Amish? Similar questions could be asked regarding practices at weddings, births, and other gendered rituals in the Amish community. Notably, the answers to these questions would impinge on the overall readability of the text, which, as it is currently presented, is easily accessible to a wide audience. The information Johnson-Weiner provides about the complexity of gender roles across Amish affiliations presents the reader with a host of opportunities for further thought and exploration.

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## Literary Reviews

Jonathan Dyck, *Shelterbelts*. Wolfville, NS  
Conundrum Press, 2022. Pp. 248. Softcover, \$20.

Jonathan Dyck's new graphic novel *Shelterbelts* opens with an aerial view of a parking lot in a grid mirroring the panels of a comic book. A car pulling donuts whips through the next panel, heedless