bumps, Ems calls them. A simple example might be "Never take out your cell phone when you are with other people." For such speed bumps to be meaningful and beneficial, we need to be clear about our priorities. The best way to do that is to talk about our values with the people close to us, as the Amish regularly do.

The central argument of *Virtually Amish* is that, in figuring out whether, when, and how to adopt new communication technologies, Amish communities rely on two litmus tests. One is whether the technologies serve to make their users feel productive and useful, to flourish, to lead what Aristotle called a good life, full of purpose and meaning. The other is whether the technologies serve to sustain or strengthen the social and emotional bonds that tie families and communities together, that lead people to help their neighbours out, when their neighbours need help, and to turn to them for help, when they themselves do. To these ends, *Virtually Amish*, is a welcome example of a new trend in academic publishing called open access, which provides free online access to the text.

Applying these tests is no simple matter. As Ems's research shows, the process is typically quite messy: it involves trying things out in communities, making rules and bending them, inventing speed bumps and negotiating compromises, and doing all this repeatedly, when new technologies appear or new social pressures arise. We are only likely to expend this effort if, like the Amish, we are constantly concerned that new communications technologies may be commandeering our attention and thereby undermining our communities and corrupting our souls—as indeed they may. This, too, is a useful lesson we can take from *Virtually Amish*.

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Gerhard Sawatzky, *Wir selbst: Roman*, ed. and documentary appendix by Carsten Gansel. Berlin: Galiani, 2020. Pp. 1,081. Hardcover, €36.

Eduard Benkler, together with his deathly ill daughter-in-law Anna and granddaughter Elly, is on a train fleeing his home because of the threat of the imminent arrival of the Red Army. He has lost contact with his son Oskar, who had been in the Imperial Russian Army in the war but is now in the White Army. At a station where they must change trains, he manages to board the next train with only his suitcase full of money and securities, leaving behind Anna and Elly. The next morning, Bolshevik soldiers, among them

Friedrich Kempel, arrive in the village and discover Elly in the station beside her dead mother. They bring Elly to a poor German couple in the village whose own daughter has recently died.

Years later, Friedrich Kempel returns to his Volga German village (never named but modelled on one of the German villages west of Balzer in the Volga German ASSR) after the severe famine in the region (in 1921–22). His wife and son Heinrich are close to starving, as are two orphans, Christian and Bärbel. Friedrich's dream is to become an independent farmer but he is unsuccessful and must go work as a hired hand for one of the richer farmers in the village; Bärbel does also, where she meets a young Kazakh boy, Kindybaj. Friedrich brings Heinrich to the city (not named but very like Balzer) to Hart, a communist active in the local soviet, to ask for advice and in the hope that Heinrich can find work. The novel now alternates between the village and the city. Hart teaches Heinrich to be a mechanic and he helps a group of women set up some knitting machines hidden by the former factory owner. After a few years of struggle to survive, the poor labourers in the village realize that they can only succeed by establishing a collective, which they do by democratic vote, after much hesitation, to end the first part of the novel.

Slowly the collective begins to expand, despite the efforts of the wealthy farmers to sabotage their work. Some of the latter are expelled from the village, others join the collective. The collective now has enough horses for several teams to plough the shared land, and Christian and Kindybaj are always the most productive workers. In the city, the knitting factory too begins to expand, and people come to the city to find work, among them Jakob and Emma Kraus with their daughter Elly, now a young woman. Heinrich is one of the technicians at the expanding factory and meets Elly; they will fall in love. Elly regularly exceeds the daily targets by much more than the other workers. Heinrich brings the first radio to the village to great excitement. Tractors too are introduced to the collective farm with great drama and eventually combines appear as well. Christian and Kindybaj are the first "tractorists" but soon Bärbel and another young woman are trained for the role. The developing relationship between Kindybaj and Bärbel is the second romantic story running through the novel. Eduard Benkler returns with a group of tourists visiting the factory in the city, recognizes Elly, and reveals himself to her. In the denouement, Elly's father, who has been working under an assumed identity for the collective farm as an accountant, also reveals himself to her and that he is a saboteur. Elly rejects him (as she rejected her grandfather), he is arrested, and resistance to collectivization ends.

The volume contains not only the novel, here summarized—with no introduction or annotations—but also a 188-page monograph by the editor (the appendix). While it has much of interest and value, those looking for more biographical information about Sawatzky will find little that is new. Gerhard Sawatzky was born December 26, 1901, in Blumenfeld in southern Ukraine into a Mennonite farming family. In 1911 they moved to Nikolskoye (now part of Protasovo) in the Altai region. Here Sawatzky grew up, finished school, and worked as a teacher from 1920 to 1923. In the late 1920s he graduated from the Leningrad Herzen State Pedagogical Institute and was sent to the Volga German ASSR to teach German language and literature in Balzer. In 1931, he was invited to Engels, the capital of the Volga German ASSR, to become literary editor for the main German-language newspaper, *Nachrichten*, then to the literary journal *Der Kämpfer* (founded in 1928) as editor until his arrest in 1938. It was the key journal for the Volga German literary community that included exiled German writers (such as Johannes Becher, later the culture minister of the DDR). Sawatzky became a member of the Association of Soviet Writers formed in 1932, was one of six hundred delegates to the first All-Union Conference of Soviet Writers in August 1934 (his friend David Schellenberg was also a delegate, representing Germans in Moscow), and became head of the Writer's Union of the Volga German ASSR. In late 1938, Sawatzky was arrested by the NKVD and sent to a labour camp in Solikamsk where he died in December 1944.

Sawatzky wrote poetry, short stories, and began writing his magnum opus in the 1930s. Several short excerpts were published in *Nachrichten* and *Der Kämpfer* in 1936 and 1938; the novel was in typesetting when Sawatzky was arrested. No copies were printed and the plates were destroyed. His wife Sophia managed to hide the original typewritten copy of the novel and took it with her when she was deported east in 1941 along with the entire Soviet German population west of the Urals; the Volga German ASSR was abolished in August 1941. In the 1980s Sophia was persuaded to allow the original typescript to be published. An edited version was published serially in *Heimatliche Weiten* (Moscow), in nine numbers from 1984 to 1988. It is this version that has been discussed in the literature, including by Harry Loewen in this journal (vol. 11, 1993).

Carsten Gansel gives few details about the differences between the versions but they appear to be a matter of words or phrases and not entire episodes. In the 1980s, for example, Stalin could not be named; the story Kempel overhears on the boat when he is on his way home, that there had been cases of cannibalism during the famine, could presumably not be included in either version. In any case,

all the words in the newly published version are Sawatzky's but not all appeared in either the 1938 version or the version published in the 1980s.

The novel is written very much in the vein of socialist realism. This is evident in the clear distinction between good, decent factory workers and peasants and greedy, heartless kulaks and factory owners, the inevitable triumph of the workers in the factory and the collective farm, the progress towards industrialization, and the decline of religion in the face of communism. Socialist realism was also a style; Gansel has informative chapters on the debates, in which Sawatzky actively participated, about what socialist realism meant and required of writers. However, the Communist Party plays a surprisingly minor role in the novel and the many lyrical descriptions of nature are also unusual in socialist realism.

The word "Mennonite" appears only once in the novel: for two years shortly after the famine, the young Christian Schröder must work, unpaid and poorly fed, for a Mennonite farmer in Lysanderhöh on the other side of the Volga. Nikolskoye, where Sawatzky grew up, is not mentioned in standard Mennonite reference works, so it is unlikely that there was a Mennonite church in the region. It is possible that Sawatzky knew little about Mennonites and even that his parents had already distanced themselves from the community. Mennonites feature prominently in the work of his friend David Schellenberg, however, and the former Mennonite colony Am Trakt was part of the Volga German ASSR, so it may be that Sawatzky simply did not want to write about Mennonites.

Readers of *JMS* will likely be interested in the novel primarily for historical or sociological reasons. Mennonite historians have focused on those who were able to leave the USSR either in the 1920s or after the Second World War, but the vast majority of Mennonites remained in their homeland. Some, like Sawatzky, enthusiastically welcomed the new regime and were eager to integrate into the new social order. Others simply survived. Many of their descendants are now in Germany, aware to varying degrees of their Mennonite roots, and part of a distinct Russian-German social and cultural community. Sawatzky and his novel are an important part of their history.

As one expects from a German publisher, the volume is beautifully produced, although there are a disconcerting number of typos. There are ten well-chosen illustrations, and an attractive colour map of the Volga ASSR from 1928 is printed on the back endpapers.

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