

*Intimacy across Borders: Race, Religion, and Migration in the U.S. Midwest*, by Jane Juffer. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013. xx, 180 pp. Notes, works cited, index. \$26.95 paperback.

Reviewer Douglas Firth Anderson is professor of history at Northwestern College (Iowa) and coauthor of *Orange City* (2014).

“Can one make a home out of wanderings?” (61). Jane Juffer asks this and related questions about her own life journey from Sioux County, Iowa, toward her current identities as a wife, mother, and scholar of Latino/a and feminist studies. She also asks the question about Latino immigrants in Sioux County, Iowa. The book’s varied wanderings also provide an angle for assessing the work. [Full disclosure: I know the author’s parents and a few of her local sources, but I do not know the author.]

For this history journal and its readers, Juffer’s book is worth considering because it documents some recent history and contemporary trends in one Iowa locale. Its approach, however, is not historical, but rather postmodern cultural studies. It is a difficult read—it wanders in and out of memoir, journalism, and feminist and postmodern theory without finding a narrative home in any of them. Arguably, this wandering approach reflects a postmodern perspective in which no meta-narrative has legitimacy; it also reflects the past of the author and the contemporary situation of Latino migrants.

The bulk of Juffer’s volume—the preface, parts of the introduction, and the first three chapters—deals with Sioux County, Iowa, albeit in a wandering fashion. The author grew up in the midwestern-inflected Dutch Reformed culture of late twentieth-century Sioux Center. Feeling constrained by the theology, mores, and political sensibilities of “home,” she found her way into social justice work with Latinos, and then into Latino/a and feminist studies. Ironically—perhaps providentially, from a Reformed perspective—her husband is also familiar with the Dutch Reformed religious tradition. He, though, is not midwestern, but rather “coloured” South African. This personal “intimacy across borders” foreshadows Juffer’s return “home” to Sioux County to study whether Latino immigrants there are finding a home.

Central to her analysis are the ethical theories of the late French Jewish postmodernist philosopher Emmanuel Levinas. (Given her midwestern Dutch Reformed focus, Minnesotan Christian Reformed Nicholas Wolterstorff’s work on justice begs to be considered; he is read in Sioux County more than Levinas.) Juffer suggests how face-to-face encounters between the Sioux County Dutch Reformed folk and the increasing numbers of Latinos over the past decade-and-a-half have led not only to faith-based attempts to treat the immigrants equi-

tably and even push back against alleged racial profiling but also to a “hybrid” Latino church, Amistad Cristiana of Sioux Center. She sees the church as a significant example of “intimacy across borders” in that it is a Latino-run congregation supported by the two dominant Reformed denominations in Sioux County, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and the Reformed Church in America (RCA). She also sees significance in the fact that the 2010 General Synod of the RCA meeting in Orange City was when the South African Belhar Confession became an RCA confession of faith. The Belhar Confession was written in 1982 by the “coloured” Dutch Reformed Mission Church as an anti-apartheid theological statement. “I believe it would not have passed” the RCA General Synod in Orange City, Juffer writes, “were it not for the presence of Latinos in the Midwest” (21). (Her statement on page xii that the RCA General Synod voted to adopt the confession on June 11, 2010, is incorrect; in 2010 the General Synod recognized the votes of the classes, which confirmed its adopting action in 2009. See [www.rca.org/page.aspx?pid=6636](http://www.rca.org/page.aspx?pid=6636).)

The historical substance of the book lies in Juffer’s on-site interviews of Sioux County Latinos and others, including a packing plant owner and the county attorney. Such material is significant for any future historical study. However, the book has a number of problems. For one thing, theory gets in the way as much as it helps. The title obscures rather than clarifies. Her exploration of concepts such as intimacy, body, and borders will more than likely deter most general readers from reading the book through. For another thing, while on the one hand the book takes religion seriously—including faith-based social justice—on the other hand there is a superficiality to its analysis of the Reformed theological tradition.

The book’s subtitle stresses the Midwest, but Sioux County does not equal the Midwest, or even the rest of Iowa. Juffer does not compare Sioux County either to Marion County, the other Dutch Reformed enclave in Iowa, or to Buena Vista County, another center of Latino migration in northwest Iowa. Not only is there little evidence that Juffer consulted much sociological or historical scholarship on the Midwest or Iowa, she even missed an important source on Amistad Cristiana (by a South African, no less): Jackie L. Smallbones, “Amistad Christiana, Sioux Center, Iowa,” *Perspectives* 25 (January 2010). Juffer’s only comparison for her Sioux County material is with the Pennsylvania towns of Shenandoah, Altoona, and Hazleton. Thus the author ends the book by wandering far away from the Dutch Reformed, Iowa, and the Midwest.

Juffer's wandering is perhaps deliberate, but it leads to an ending of Anglos and Latinos alienated from each other. Still, in the course of following the book's meanderings, persistent readers will glean some interesting things about some recent developments in Sioux County. Outsiders might consider them surprising, yet the developments have some rootage within the Dutch Reformed tradition. Among the Reformed, it is a theological truism that *ecclesia reformata et semper reformanda secundum verbum dei* (the reformed church is always being reformed by the Word of God). That Word reminds those who have ears to hear that in face-to-face encounters we should expect to meet God. Neither apartheid nor excluding the stranger need be the last word.

*What Happens Next? Matters of Life and Death*, by Douglas Bauer. Iowa and the Midwest Experience Series. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013. xii, 151 pp. \$17.00 paperback and e-book.

Reviewer Thomas K. Dean is senior presidential writer/editor at the University of Iowa. His extensive writings about the importance of place include *Under a Midland Sky* (2008).

*What Happens Next?* is a collection of personal essays exploring aging and mortality through the lens of the author's own age-related ailments and his parents' and grandparents' deaths, especially his mother's. Currently living in Boston, Douglas Bauer grew up in Prairie City, a small town near Des Moines and the emotional and topical center of his book. The collection has justly received critical acclaim for its sensitive thematic insight and finely honed literary style. Bauer's admirable craft is on full display across nine essays.

For historians of Iowa and the Midwest, most valuable are Bauer's depictions of and insights into growing up on an Iowa farm in the mid-twentieth century, along with his experience maintaining familial and geographical ties in adult life. Raised in a working-class family—he grew up on a multigenerational family farm, and his maternal grandfather was an Iowa coal miner—Bauer gives individual voice to a typical experience of a rural family.

The essay of greatest historical interest is "What Was Served," which revolves around Bauer's mother's life as a farm wife and her domestic duties, particularly serving meals to her husband and father-in-law. The essay's rich detail about a particular farm family's experience is presented from a unique perspective—that of a boy who spent more time inside than outside, who identified more with his mother, Maude, than his father. Framing the farm fields from the kitchen window, Maude saw "the outdoors as just another room, an extension of