

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.

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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

the farmhouse to be kept picked up" (46). Because of his asthma and his lack of mechanical skill, Bauer himself joined his mother in the circumscribed life of the house. As he says, "The most I could do to be a farmer was to eat like one" (44).

After living in Cheyenne, Wyoming (where Bauer was born), while Bauer's father was in the service, Maude was eager to return to Iowa when her father-in-law and husband became farming partners. Eventually, however, the limitations of a farm wife's life, especially after she had had some independence as a schoolteacher and a store clerk, weighed on Maude. Partly as a result of living in the same house with her in-laws for a protracted time, "the unwelcome surprises of her adult life began, and she got angry at them and stayed that way" (54). One of Bauer's most interesting observations captures one of those "unwelcome surprises," a kind of estrangement no doubt experienced by many farm women. As Maude tells her son later in life, "Your grandpa was the love of your dad's life" (56).

The book also includes depictions of Maude's widowhood in Prairie City. Of special insight is one of Bauer's observations about small-town life: "People who live their whole lives in such small places must deal with a terribly intimate geography. Memory and moment and future, all of them are embedded and overlapping" (127). Bauer ponders this special characteristic as his mother ages in an apartment ten miles from the farm where she lived most of her adult life, across the street from the nursing home she hopes never to reside in, and only a few blocks from the cemetery where she will be buried.

Bauer's book offers multiple rewards, from an enriching literary experience to unique insight into not only "what happens next" but also to Iowa farm and small-town life.