

approach. He's written, in his own words, with the aim "to shift attention away from reading aesthetics as ideology toward trying to understand it . . . as both a theory of sensuous cognition and a theory of the forms and social functions of art" (51). For Schweighauser, self-identifying aestheticians like Emory Elliott, Louis Freitas Caton, Jeffre



democratic social order that hopes to maintain its faith in the promise of inclusion while simultaneously practicing exclusion” (104).

For those interested in contemporary thought on ethics, especially in relation to establishing and maintaining democracy and community, Toth’s bridging of Nancy with Emmanuel Levinas, as some others do, should make his study of American culture, character, and thought especially interesting. Toth sees *The Jazz Singer* and James Weldon Johnson’s *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) as following Nancy’s argument that “a sense of individuality is effected by the contingency of communal relations that necessarily precede that sense” (45). He understands such relations as consistent with Levinas. Toth believes the two thinkers come together in discussing “the face-to-face encounter.” He asserts, “Isn’t this as much Nancy’s point as Levinas’s?” (132). In such a mode of thought, Toth argues, “we must nevertheless hold to (on some level) an ethics of the face—as in an ethics of sharing and receiving something recognizable” (133). Toth imagines dire consequences for failing to live up to such an ethics that would lead to an “ethical violence” (130) that in turn “could easily justify an egotistical withdrawal of the self, an abject refusal to share the self or to work at understanding the other” (133).

The spectrum of diverse works that Toth convincingly analyzes in detail proves as impressive as his use of philosophy for insight and understanding.