Toomer, Jean


After attending the University of Wisconsin and the City College of New York, Toomer taught briefly in the Sparta, Ga., public schools and then turned to lecturing and writing. *Cane* (1923; reprinted 1967) is an experimental novel which celebrates the Negro through the symbol of the title. It is considered his best work. Toomer also wrote extensively for the *Dial* and other little magazines and was the author of several experimental plays. In 1926 he attended the Gurdjieff Institute in France, dedicated to the expansion of consciousness and meditation, and upon his return led Gurdjieff groups in Harlem and Chicago in the late 1920s and early '30s. He began a similar institution in Portage, Wis., in 1931. Although influential on black writers, only since his death has he been recognized as a writer of note, primarily for *Cane*. 