PUBLIC LECTURE

“The New American Race and the Making of Literary History"

When Jean Toomer's *Cane* was rediscovered in the 1960s, it was hailed as "the black classic that discovered 'soul.'" Ever since, though, its author has been dogged by complicated questions about race, largely stemming from his pronouncement that he was "neither black nor white nor in between," but a member of a "new American race." This has continued to drive scholarship on Toomer, and to raise questions about who we read, why we read them, and what we ask about them when we do so. In order to consider these questions, "The New American Race and the Making of Literary History" examines the story of Toomer's marriage to white modernist writer Margery Latimer, upon which he most famously articulated his theory of the new American race. But rather than rehash debates over Toomer, it focuses on Latimer's role in construction of the new American race and the fate of her work in its aftermath.

WORKSHOP

*West of Harlem: African American Writers and the Borderlands*

***RSVP for pre-circulated introduction and chapter***

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