

00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:10,340

I'm introducing our next speaker, Tatiana Tairola-Dailey.

00:00:15,680 --> 00:00:20,979

She obtained her Ph.D. in Caribbean Literature and Linguistics at the University of Puerto Rico

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in Rio Piedras campus and teaches literature and writing at Elizabeth City State University.

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Among some of her scholarly publications, and are known as Antoine McKay, Brant Sponham, Derek

00:00:35,020 --> 00:00:43,659

Walcott, Jack Romano, Ralph DeBoisier, and Patrick Somerville.

00:00:44,459 --> 00:00:52,220

She is co-editor of Critical Perspectives on Caribbean Literature and Culture. So let's welcome her.

00:01:05,500 --> 00:01:06,139

TATIANA TAIROLA-DAILEY

00:01:09,360 --> 00:01:14,540

I'll be speaking about my book and it's available for sale if anybody is interested.

00:01:15,040 --> 00:01:20,319

But basically I'll just be telling you how this book came about and the research that I have

00:01:20,319 --> 00:01:28,260

done what it contributes to the field of Caribbean studies and I'm telling you about different chapters of the book.

00:01:28,620 --> 00:01:35,080

Okay, so the title of the book is Claude McKay's Liberating Narrative, Russian and Anglophone Caribbean Literary Connections.

00:01:35,699 --> 00:01:40,379

And I will tell you how I first became interested and what kind of research I have done.

00:01:40,739 --> 00:01:46,480

So I first became interested in Claude McKay in the early stage of my Caribbean studies when

00:01:46,480 --> 00:01:49,080

I read his article, Soviet Russia and the Negro.

00:01:49,819 --> 00:01:55,519

As he states in the article, he couldn't be appreciated for who he was just because of his skin color.

00:01:56,040 --> 00:02:02,819

However, the Soviet Union of that time, and we are talking about 1922-1923, opened him acceptance

00:02:02,819 --> 00:02:05,879

and appreciation that he couldn't find anywhere else.

00:02:05,900 --> 00:02:10,960

And he talks about it in his autobiography, The Long Way from Home, that he is talking about

00:02:10,960 --> 00:02:16,419

the differences between, he talks about the United States and England, right?

00:02:16,880 --> 00:02:21,220

So when McKay arrives to the United States, he said he was shocked by it.

00:02:21,300 --> 00:02:27,100

There was racism in Jamaica, but it was kind of accomplished, but very direct in the United

00:02:27,100 --> 00:02:28,660

States, so he talks about it.

00:02:28,660 --> 00:02:32,759

And then he traveled to England, he traveled to Germany, and when he arrived to the Soviet Union

00:02:32,759 --> 00:02:39,419

in 1922-1923, as he describes The Long Way from Home, it was a totally different experience for him.

00:02:39,440 --> 00:02:45,020

He felt like for the first time in his life, and we're talking about a long time ago, right,

00:02:45,020 --> 00:02:50,619

that he said that he was appreciating for, you know, for who he was, that people didn't have

00:02:50,619 --> 00:02:56,600

to look at his skin color, but they appreciated his poetry,

appreciated him as a writer.

00:02:57,179 --> 00:03:03,179

So while this article sparked my initial interest in George McKay, it really became a long passion

00:03:03,179 --> 00:03:09,179

that took me to Russia, the United States, and France, to trace the writer's footsteps and to understand him better.

00:03:09,740 --> 00:03:12,419

My first trip was to Russia in the summer of 2003.

00:03:12,899 --> 00:03:17,580

By that time, I had read his autobiography, his first autobiography, The Long Way from Home,

00:03:17,660 --> 00:03:23,199

in which he mentioned his meetings with some of the important 20th century Russian writers.

00:03:23,699 --> 00:03:28,600

When I arrived in Russia, I knew that I wanted to do my research in the archives of the writers

00:03:28,600 --> 00:03:36,160

that McKay mentioned in The Long Way from Home, and one of the writers that he met in Russia.

00:03:36,880 --> 00:03:42,380

So this took me to the Institute of World Literature in Moscow, the Russian Center for the Preservation

00:03:42,380 --> 00:03:47,619

and Study of Documents of Written History, the Library of Lenin in Moscow, so it's still called,

00:03:47,619 --> 00:03:53,440

you know, 2003, it's still called the Library of Lenin, Pushkin's House, St.

00:03:53,440 --> 00:03:55,559

Petersburg State University, and St.

00:03:55,559 --> 00:03:57,539

Petersburg State Library in St.

00:03:57,539 --> 00:04:01,960

Petersburg, so I have to go through all the big places, but, you know, of course, like, if you

00:04:01,960 --> 00:04:05,779

know, you don't always find what you're looking for in all of these places.

00:04:06,500 --> 00:04:10,899

So, however, I would like him, when I was doing my research at the Institute of World Literature

00:04:10,899 --> 00:04:16,079

in Moscow, I found two entries of Tchaikovsky's diary, and that's the writer that McKay mentioned,

00:04:16,619 --> 00:04:21,839

so that's my contribution, so I translated the diary and included it in the book.

00:04:22,160 --> 00:04:27,579

So Tchaikovsky is a leading critic and author of children's books, children's books, in which

00:04:27,579 --> 00:04:34,440

he refers to McKay's reading of his poetry in The House of Mykolsky, another important 20th century Soviet poet.

00:04:34,899 --> 00:04:39,839

I have translated the entries into English and included them in the second chapter of the book.

00:04:40,320 --> 00:04:46,779

So Tchaikovsky basically just describes that McKay, I guess McKay was reading in Russian because,

00:04:47,899 --> 00:04:53,320

as Tchaikovsky said, that McKay was reading his poetry and he was pronouncing as a Ukrainian

00:04:53,320 --> 00:04:59,260

person, I mean, that's what, you know, so I guess he was reading in Russian, you know, and then

00:04:59,260 --> 00:05:05,380

he was just sharing with the Russian writers about his experiences in the United States and

00:05:05,380 --> 00:05:12,880

kind of educating them about the United States of that time and African American people. Furthermore, in St.

00:05:12,880 --> 00:05:17,540

Petersburg State Library, I found articles in several newspapers and magazines that mentioned

00:05:17,540 --> 00:05:20,880

McKay and his experience in Jamaica, the United States, and Russia.

00:05:21,239 --> 00:05:27,040

I also came across the Soviet critic of McKay's first two novels that I translated and cited

00:05:27,040 --> 00:05:29,920

in the second chapter of the publication.

00:05:30,320 --> 00:05:35,179

Basically, what I have found is the reviews of his first two novels, from Tuparnov and Banjo,

00:05:35,700 --> 00:05:39,119

and they were not favorable reviews by the Soviet critics.

00:05:39,440 --> 00:05:46,500

They were saying that McKay's novels were not revolutionary enough, which I kind of contest

00:05:46,500 --> 00:05:53,380

in my book because when I say liberating narrative, meaning that it was liberating, it was liberating in the context.

00:05:53,660 --> 00:05:56,200

They just didn't understand what he was doing.

00:05:56,820 --> 00:06:02,279

So while in Russia, I also found that McKay's papers were located at the Young Collection of

00:06:02,279 --> 00:06:08,760

American Literature, the Binary Area Book and Manuscript Library, and this is where I went next.

00:06:08,980 --> 00:06:14,239

By that time, I had read Home to Harlem and Banjo and became fascinated with Ray, the Haitian

00:06:14,239 --> 00:06:16,119

protagonist of the first two novels.

00:06:16,339 --> 00:06:21,420

Even though McKay's manuscript, Group Life and Literature, in which he mentions Gorky and Dostoevsky,

00:06:21,820 --> 00:06:27,279

was the only document that related to my particular interest at the time, it was fascinating

00:06:27,279 --> 00:06:32,500

to read McKay's correspondence, not only with other Harlem Renaissance writers, but also with

00:06:32,500 --> 00:06:34,540

his daughter, Pope McKay Burnsham.

00:06:34,679 --> 00:06:38,739

I have included some of his correspondence in the first chapter of my publication.

00:06:39,959 --> 00:06:46,380

So I'm talking a little bit about the notes that I gave you, talking a little bit about McKay's

00:06:46,380 --> 00:06:48,799

experience in the Soviet Union.

00:06:49,359 --> 00:06:58,339

So even though there is a recent publication by Gary Hall, in which he says that it's not true that McKay denounced communism.

00:06:58,859 --> 00:07:02,920

In his book, he says that McKay was a communist to the very end.

00:07:03,480 --> 00:07:14,119

However, I don't know, but in the correspondence, and in his autobiography, McKay says that he denounced communism.

00:07:14,399 --> 00:07:20,779

However, I know that he says that his experience in the Soviet Union was very inspirational

00:07:20,779 --> 00:07:23,640

for him in terms of his other items.

00:07:24,720 --> 00:07:31,200

So, and here I have a quote, like he was called Banshoi, and that's McKay uses Russian word in Alone From Home.

00:07:31,399 --> 00:07:35,679

I think it was the end, because I'm going to skip some of these notes.

00:07:36,799 --> 00:07:38,899

But okay, so I'll read that one.

00:07:38,899 --> 00:07:43,700

That Banshoi, Banshoi, which means big in Russian,

00:07:48,019 --> 00:07:53,679

was sweet music in my ears and an inspiration, but it also stirred up a hell of discontent with me.

00:07:54,019 --> 00:07:56,279

Why should I be big translated into Russian?

00:07:56,660 --> 00:08:01,940

I felt that if I were to be Banshoi as a literary artist in a foreign language, I should first

00:08:01,940 --> 00:08:05,899

make a signal of achievement in my native, adopted language.

00:08:06,220 --> 00:08:10,579

Even though McKay enjoyed the warm personal acceptance and appreciation by the Russians, he

00:08:10,579 --> 00:08:13,660

never totally committed himself to Soviet ideology.

00:08:14,200 --> 00:08:15,260

As he wrote to J.S.

00:08:15,260 --> 00:08:21,820

Milton Johnson in a letter dated May 8, 1935, he went to Russia as a writer in the free spirit,

00:08:21,839 --> 00:08:22,880

and he left the same.

00:08:23,380 --> 00:08:27,540

When he left Russia, he was determined to become a writer and a spokesman for his people.

00:08:28,519 --> 00:08:33,020

So, I left Russia with one determination and one objective to write.

00:08:33,479 --> 00:08:38,919

I was not received in Russia as a politician, but primarily as a Negro poet, and the tremendous

00:08:38,919 --> 00:08:41,859

reception was a great inspiration and a push to write.

00:08:42,260 --> 00:08:47,500

I often felt in Russia that I was honored as a poet altogether out of

proportion of my actual

00:08:47,500 --> 00:08:52,280

performance, and that I was fired with desire to accomplish the utmost.

00:08:52,500 --> 00:08:57,979

So that's what he said, that he just was so encouraged by his experience on a personal level

00:08:57,979 --> 00:09:04,219

and also on a professional level that he just wanted to write at all costs by the time he left Russia.

00:09:04,599 --> 00:09:07,200

And I have a quote about Pushkin.

00:09:07,359 --> 00:09:08,219

I don't know if you're familiar.

00:09:08,659 --> 00:09:13,919

At the beginning, Pushkin is a Russian poet with African heritage.

00:09:14,760 --> 00:09:22,000

And I have this quote by Maria Tsvetaeva at the beginning of the handout that I gave you, where

00:09:22,000 --> 00:09:29,840

she says that she just admires black race, and she associates the talent of poetry with black race.

00:09:29,900 --> 00:09:35,619

And she refers to Pushkin's monuments and admires the blackness of the monuments.

00:09:35,900 --> 00:09:38,640

So if you're interested to read the quote.

00:09:43,119 --> 00:09:51,880

And in the last quote that I read, when Makiya said that he was appreciated as a poet, right,

00:09:51,880 --> 00:09:58,640

that he said in Russia he was appreciated as a poet, and in his autobiography he says that one

00:09:58,640 --> 00:10:08,299

of the writers that he met there gave him a photograph of Pushkin with African features, where Pushkin has curly hair.



00:10:08,599 --> 00:10:11,140

So at the beginning there are different kind of photographs.

00:10:11,619 --> 00:10:18,080

So but that particular one, you know, with curly hair, and Makiya said, and that writer said,

00:10:18,359 --> 00:10:24,219

well here is a photograph for you, you know, of Pushkin, you know, our Pushkin was also a revolutionary,

00:10:25,140 --> 00:10:30,760

you know, in terms of creating Russian literature, you know, in terms of national Russian literature.

00:10:31,520 --> 00:10:39,059

So, and then Makiya said that this photograph was one of the greatest treasures of his life, the photograph of Pushkin.

00:10:39,580 --> 00:10:44,900

So and then when I was doing research at the Beinecke Collection, I thought, you know, that photograph was there.

00:10:44,940 --> 00:10:49,900

So Makiya has not lost the photograph. But he kept it.

00:10:50,200 --> 00:10:54,900

So what I'm basically saying in the book is that it is liberating narrative.

00:10:55,359 --> 00:11:00,580

Makiya was doing something in the Caribbean context that the Russian writers were doing in the

00:11:00,580 --> 00:11:03,099

19th century and the native soul thinkers.

00:11:04,580 --> 00:11:10,799

So my, in my book I also mentioned two critics, Del Peterson and Kate Baughman.

00:11:11,979 --> 00:11:16,840

Del Peterson's books are from varnished literature of Russian and African American soul.

00:11:17,059 --> 00:11:22,320

Because when I first became interested in Makiya, and I have this quote, I just read this quote

00:11:22,320 --> 00:11:24,099

and I thought that was so interesting.

00:11:25,460 --> 00:11:28,080

You know, dreams of making something with words.

00:11:28,799 --> 00:11:35,659

So this is a quote from Home to Harlem by Andre, the Haitian protagonist. That's what he said.

00:11:36,200 --> 00:11:38,059

Dream of making something with words.

00:11:38,219 --> 00:11:39,799

What could he make in fashion?

00:11:40,159 --> 00:11:48,000

Could he ever create art around which incomprehensible words and phrases don't? What was art anyway?

00:11:48,400 --> 00:11:52,039

Was it more than a clear-cut presentation of a vivid impression of life?

00:11:52,320 --> 00:11:56,719

Only the Russians of the later era seemed to stand up like giants in the new.

00:12:00,280 --> 00:12:14,780

When he read them now, he thought, here were the elements that the So the Haitian protagonist

00:12:14,780 --> 00:12:20,640

of Home to Harlem, he reads that dioptic from varnishing also refers to old-age Russian writers.

00:12:20,880 --> 00:12:25,719

So I became interested, like, why was Makiya interested in these Russian writers?

00:12:25,719 --> 00:12:29,960

Because, you know, Ray is interested, but obviously Makiya is interested as well.

00:12:30,380 --> 00:12:36,880

So I only tried as a native soul thinker that also, you know, rejected these foreign ideas and

00:12:36,880 --> 00:12:39,719

principles and found beauty in their own culture.

00:12:39,960 --> 00:12:44,479

I started with Pushkin, like, he doesn't mention Pushkin here, but, you know, Pushkin is considered

00:12:44,479 --> 00:12:53,900

a Russian national poet precisely for, you know, taking pride in the Russian culture, not imitating foreign ideas and principles.

00:12:54,359 --> 00:13:01,820

And when he says here, what is art, that's the same, Tolstoy has an essay that is called What is Art?

00:13:02,859 --> 00:13:09,349

And in the essay, you know, Tolstoy also refers to Pushkin, and he says that the art is something

00:13:10,030 --> 00:13:16,369

original, you know, original form of expression and not the imitation of foreign ideas and principles.

00:13:16,750 --> 00:13:19,309

So that's what Makiya is asking too, you know, what is art?

00:13:19,369 --> 00:13:21,750

Like, his character Ray is asking, what is art?

00:13:22,010 --> 00:13:25,289

How can I create, you know, original type of art?

00:13:26,390 --> 00:13:33,250

So, and then I was, like, just reading and rereading Russian literature, reading more Caribbean

00:13:33,250 --> 00:13:37,650

literature because I was studying my PhD in Caribbean literature, like, studying all of that,

00:13:37,750 --> 00:13:43,609

and seeing the similarities, like, between the two, you know, double consciousness, split protagonist,

00:13:44,390 --> 00:13:52,169

kind of, you know, Ray, like, the conflict between instinct and intellect, and all these themes

00:13:52,169 --> 00:13:55,090

are also present in the Russian literature, you know?

00:13:55,150 --> 00:14:00,390

So that's what the book is about, the influence of Russian literature

on Poet Makiya, and also

00:14:00,390 --> 00:14:02,770

the similarities between the two types of literature.

00:14:02,929 --> 00:14:08,570

And then, you know, as I was making all of the similarities, I read Dale Peterson's book, Afro-Mondays,

00:14:08,809 --> 00:14:13,210

the Literatures of Russian and African American Soul, and it was kind of fascinating to see

00:14:13,210 --> 00:14:17,750

his analysis because what I was, the connections that I was making between Caribbean and Russian,

00:14:18,250 --> 00:14:24,150

he makes the same connections between African American and Russian literature, even though he

00:14:24,150 --> 00:14:26,909

doesn't mention Makiya, right, in that book.

00:14:27,030 --> 00:14:33,270

Then another book that was important that I also used in my book is Kate Baldwin's book, Beyond

00:14:33,270 --> 00:14:39,489

the Color Line and the Iron Curtain, Reading Encounters Between Black and Red, 1922-1933.

00:14:40,090 --> 00:14:48,270

So she does write about Makiya, but she doesn't acknowledge his Caribbean background, and the

00:14:48,270 --> 00:14:51,729

importance of the Soviet Union in his development of the West Indian consciousness.

00:14:52,190 --> 00:14:57,869

So in my book, I specifically focus upon Makiya's Jamaican background and the importance of

00:14:57,869 --> 00:15:03,510

19th century Russian literature in his formation of a solution to his dilemma with yoke cultural identity.

00:15:04,309 --> 00:15:09,010

In the first chapter, I refer to Makiya's Jamaican beginnings and

world travels and argue that

00:15:09,010 --> 00:15:13,650

as Makiya's international consciousness grew as a result of his travels in the United States,

00:15:13,849 --> 00:15:19,890

England, Russia, Germany, France, Spain, and Morocco, his national Jamaican consciousness also increased.

00:15:20,070 --> 00:15:25,330

As I point out, Makiya's Jamaican beginnings and international travels play an important role

00:15:25,330 --> 00:15:27,049

in his development as a writer.

00:15:27,530 --> 00:15:33,429

And thinking about international travels, one of the most important, I think Russia was very

00:15:33,429 --> 00:15:41,010

important in that, but another important point was Africa, his experience in Morocco, and the

00:15:41,010 --> 00:15:42,630

second page of the handout.

00:15:43,010 --> 00:15:49,369

In a letter to James Robinson, Makiya writes, I learned very much abroad, especially in Africa,

00:15:49,609 --> 00:15:54,690

and I am certain that Negroes will have to realize themselves as an organized group to get anything.

00:15:55,109 --> 00:15:59,489

Wherever I traveled, I observed that the people who were getting anywhere were those who could

00:15:59,489 --> 00:16:01,809

realize the strength of their cultural groups.

00:16:02,150 --> 00:16:06,890

The political demands were considered and determined by the force of their cultural grouping.

00:16:06,890 --> 00:16:12,770

It was the same underlying principle in communist Russia as in fascist Spain and democratic

00:16:12,770 --> 00:16:15,330  
France and England and, in fact, in Africa.

00:16:15,729 --> 00:16:20,890  
So what he does is Africa just helped him to realize that African American people could not

00:16:20,890 --> 00:16:26,169  
rely on white people or could not rely on communist parties.

00:16:26,590 --> 00:16:31,729  
So what he says is when he comes back to the United States from Morocco, he says that they just

00:16:31,729 --> 00:16:35,109  
have to organize themselves and rely on themselves.

00:16:40,890 --> 00:16:45,750  
That was his novel, that the setting of the novel was Jamaica.

00:16:46,609 --> 00:16:51,650  
So I think that many things in Africa remind us of Jamaica.

00:16:52,169 --> 00:16:54,270  
So it inspired him to write that.

00:16:55,190 --> 00:16:57,929  
Okay, so let me see.

00:16:58,049 --> 00:17:04,689  
In the first chapter, I talk about the Jamaican beginning, because he is one of the first Caribbean

00:17:04,689 --> 00:17:12,130  
writers to write in Jamaican Creole, and he was the first one to turn to the Jamaican folk as

00:17:12,130 --> 00:17:13,569  
the source of his inspiration.

00:17:14,250 --> 00:17:18,310  
He expressed the everyday reality of the common people in the language created by them.

00:17:19,130 --> 00:17:24,189  
Despite the wide susceptibility of the British cultural standard in Jamaica of that time, he

00:17:24,189 --> 00:17:30,310

turns to Jamaican indigenous language and cultures, like even from the beginning, he started doing that.

00:17:30,449 --> 00:17:36,130

His Jamaican volumes of poetry are pioneering attempts by a black West Indian to materialistically

00:17:36,130 --> 00:17:37,630

reflect the life of his people.

00:17:40,650 --> 00:17:48,790

So in the first chapter of my book, I only briefly refer to his experience in the Soviet Union.

00:17:50,170 --> 00:17:52,630

More of that is in the second chapter.

00:17:53,430 --> 00:17:59,949

In the second chapter, also, when I went to Russia, I kind of wanted to see not only the influence

00:17:59,949 --> 00:18:07,329

of Russian writers on Marquis, but I also was hoping to see something about Marquis' influence

00:18:07,329 --> 00:18:10,609

on Danyatyn, the 20th century Russian writer.

00:18:10,969 --> 00:18:16,709

And I couldn't find anything specific, so what I do is kind of just present my own analysis

00:18:16,709 --> 00:18:26,270

why Marquis could possibly have influence on Danyatyn, and again, this kind of similarity between Danyatyn and Marquis.

00:18:26,770 --> 00:18:34,329

So, and some of this similarity is criticism of rational thinking, avoid of any authentic feelings

00:18:34,329 --> 00:18:40,349

and emotions, the inner struggle between reason and instinct, the criticism of any type of social

00:18:40,349 --> 00:18:42,930

system that limits personal freedom.

00:18:49,469 --> 00:18:55,770

So, and the third chapter of the dissertation is my favorite chapter, where I finally turn to

00:18:55,770 --> 00:18:58,050  
the Russian writers of the 19th century.

00:18:58,410 --> 00:19:04,489  
As I point out, it's not a coincidence that Ray, the fiction narrator of Home to Harlem and

00:19:04,489 --> 00:19:10,010  
Punishment, and Kashpytas Gokhaida, Staisky, Tolstoy, Chekhov, and Durgenev, to be creators of genuine art.

00:19:10,109 --> 00:19:15,089  
His engagement with them, Home to Harlem, and his subsequent internal dialogue with Tolstoy

00:19:15,089 --> 00:19:23,949  
and Banjo, reveal the influence on his intellectual and artistic development, and on his assertion of Afro-Caribbean identity.

00:19:24,430 --> 00:19:30,250  
So the Russian writers are important, because in Home to Harlem, Ray asks the question, what is art?

00:19:30,510 --> 00:19:34,469  
And he really is struggling to connect with the common people.

00:19:34,989 --> 00:19:40,209  
He's considering himself alienated and intellectual, which is the same in Russian literature,

00:19:40,569 --> 00:19:43,589  
Crime and Punishment, Raskolnikov, alienated and intellectual.

00:19:44,209 --> 00:19:48,670  
And alienated and intellectual represents foreign culture, like he wants to be a Napoleon.

00:19:50,430 --> 00:19:53,050  
Like the French culture, right?

00:19:53,050 --> 00:19:58,270  
So Sonia, another character in Crime and Punishment, that's the Russian culture, right?

00:19:58,270 --> 00:20:01,010  
So he's alienated, he's struggling with that.

00:20:01,329 --> 00:20:07,089  
So the same Ray, he's in Home to Harlem, he's alienated, alienated and



intellectual, he's like

00:20:07,089 --> 00:20:10,109

struggling to come closer to the masses, but he's not able to.

00:20:10,550 --> 00:20:16,829

So the same in Banjo, like he has an internal dialogue with Tolstoy, and he's fascinated with

00:20:16,829 --> 00:20:24,410

Tolstoy because he's the one that found value but not only found value, he's kind of came close to the patterns.

00:20:25,430 --> 00:20:26,689

And Ray feels like he still can't come.

00:20:26,770 --> 00:20:32,410

Even though he's kind of making an attempt, and they have Steven from all over the world, and

00:20:32,410 --> 00:20:37,310

he's making like a great attempt to connect with the common folks, still unable to.

00:20:37,829 --> 00:20:43,550

And then only in the third novel, Banana Baja, which has a totally different name, and a totally

00:20:43,550 --> 00:20:48,410

different protagonist, Vita Plath, we don't have this internal struggle anymore.

00:20:48,589 --> 00:20:54,410

We have this greater integration with the local culture and preference for the local culture,

00:20:54,489 --> 00:20:57,170

you know, and not the British culture.

00:20:59,770 --> 00:21:06,270

So Home to Harlem and Banjo, Russian writers of the 19th century, are central influences in Ray's penodrama.

00:21:06,650 --> 00:21:11,650

Similar to those different individuals who enter a skull nick of penospeech and a symbol of

00:21:11,650 --> 00:21:18,589

certain orientation to life and ideological positions, the symbol of a specific real-life situation

00:21:18,589 --> 00:21:21,849

to those same ideological questions that are mentioned.

00:21:22,209 --> 00:21:25,569

They exemplify a type of art that Ray would like to create.

00:21:27,530 --> 00:21:33,869

So, let me see, the first novelman decides to come closer to the masses and becomes actively

00:21:33,869 --> 00:21:36,750

active in the Russian literature of the 19th century.

00:21:36,750 --> 00:21:43,930

Mikey and Ray also gain strength through contact with the cultural treasure of Africa and with ordinary black folks.

00:21:44,410 --> 00:21:50,489

However, I love Dostoevsky as Solnikov, who finally rejects the Napoleonic type of thinking

00:21:50,489 --> 00:21:55,369

and returns to his national sentiments embedded in Russian Orthodox Church, because it finally

00:21:55,369 --> 00:21:59,969

kind of comes to realization of the importance of faith.

00:22:00,130 --> 00:22:05,229

Because that was an important theme in Russian Native Soul thinkers like Dostoevsky and Tolstoy,

00:22:05,430 --> 00:22:08,630

the beauty of the Russian culture is the Russian Orthodox Church.

00:22:09,589 --> 00:22:12,109

And this is a representation of Sonia.

00:22:12,910 --> 00:22:16,930

The Russian Orthodox Church is represented through Sonia.

00:22:17,270 --> 00:22:22,369

And then Solnikov struggles with her throughout the novel, but at the end he comes to repentance.

00:22:26,349 --> 00:22:36,530

However, unlike Dostoevsky and Solnikov, Ray fully rejects Western education in defining his Afro-Caribbean identity.

00:22:37,170 --> 00:22:43,250

He understands the contradiction between intellect and instinct, but he doesn't want to forsake either one of them.

00:22:43,369 --> 00:22:49,010

While his contact with the black community in Banjo brings him closer to his African-based truth,

00:22:49,270 --> 00:22:51,589

he is unable to undergo complete change.

00:22:52,469 --> 00:22:59,270

In Banana Bottom, Mikey's final novel, he further develops ideas first initiated in Home to Harlem and Banjo.

00:22:59,810 --> 00:23:04,750

Peter Plante, the protagonist of the third novel, continues the search for a particular Afro-Caribbean

00:23:04,750 --> 00:23:12,050

identity started by Ray within North American and French settings and completed in an authentic Jamaican environment.

00:23:12,410 --> 00:23:17,709

If in the first novel, Ray's engagement in a standard dialogue with the Russian writers leads

00:23:17,709 --> 00:23:22,630

him to a discussion of the importance of the African heritage within the Caribbean identity,

00:23:23,189 --> 00:23:28,709

in Banana Bottom there is an action, an actual integration of an educated colonial with the

00:23:28,709 --> 00:23:32,369

common Jamaican people and the Afro-Jamaican culture that they represent.

00:23:33,290 --> 00:23:39,469

The human uprooting from the nurturing Afro-Jamaican soil leads to her more permanent attachment

00:23:39,469 --> 00:23:41,930

to cultural and spiritual values.

00:23:42,329 --> 00:23:48,089

So Peter feels like, you know, she was educated in England, but because she was uprooted from

00:23:48,089 --> 00:23:54,069

her culture when she comes back, she just loves it even more and she wants to be more a part of her culture.

00:23:54,209 --> 00:23:57,989

So we see clearly this preference for the native Jamaican culture.

00:23:58,410 --> 00:24:02,949

So in terms of the common themes that I analyzed in the book, between the Russian literature

00:24:02,949 --> 00:24:08,650

and the Caribbean literature, I also mentioned in the fourth chapter, Stella James and Albert

00:24:08,650 --> 00:24:13,229

Bastyr, two Trinidadian writers who were also influenced by the Russian literature.

00:24:14,030 --> 00:24:18,530

So I have analyzed them and also their similarity with Mikey.

00:24:18,530 --> 00:24:26,890

And another part of the book is kind of similarities in general between Russian literature and Caribbean literature. I'll go from Caribbean.

00:24:27,469 --> 00:24:37,510

So some of the similarities is cultural dualism that I talked about, like, okay, I don't know what I am. Am I this? Am I that? You know, how? So cultural dualism.

00:24:37,689 --> 00:24:45,670

A deep appreciation of lower classes, that is in Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy and the Caribbean writers

00:24:45,670 --> 00:24:46,910

that I mentioned in the book.

00:24:47,569 --> 00:24:53,050

Criticism of the middle class for imitating foreign ideas and principles and desire to come

00:24:53,050 --> 00:24:54,410

closer to the common people.

00:24:54,589 --> 00:25:00,349

Important issues and concerns that Mikey shares with Stella James and Albert Bastyr, his Trinidadian

00:25:00,349 --> 00:25:05,390

contemporaries also influenced by the Russian literature of the 19th century.

00:25:06,010 --> 00:25:12,189

In the last chapter, I argue that Mikey deserves respect and admiration because of the value

00:25:12,189 --> 00:25:17,790

and importance of his work rather than the reason that he was, and I'm just quoting, that rare

00:25:17,790 --> 00:25:22,670

thing, a literate Negro, and only seconded because of the merits of his work.

00:25:23,069 --> 00:25:26,849

That's one of the critics that guilt, which I also agree with.

00:25:27,430 --> 00:25:33,449

I hope my study can be used as a paradigm for further analysis of both Russian literary perception

00:25:33,449 --> 00:25:40,089

in the Anglo-Hungarian context and similar themes and concerns that are present in these two

00:25:40,089 --> 00:25:47,430

distinct yet similar types of writing. I think that's it. Thank you.

00:25:52,569 --> 00:26:03,989

I don't know if you read this quote by Tsvetaeva.

00:26:05,650 --> 00:26:07,329

I thought that was so interesting.

00:26:10,829 --> 00:26:17,170

She's talking about the monuments of Pushkin, the third one, and she says, From the Pushkin

00:26:17,170 --> 00:26:22,910

monument I also got my mad love for the black people, character of whole lifetimes.

00:26:23,010 --> 00:26:28,989

Today I feel the engulfment of my whole being, when by chance in a streetcar or some other vehicle

00:26:28,989 --> 00:26:31,469

I find myself with a black person next to me.

00:26:31,469 --> 00:26:34,969

My white feet are side-by-side with this black deity.

00:26:35,550 --> 00:26:41,530

In every Negro I love Pushkin and recognize Pushkin, the black Pushkin monument of my preliterate

00:26:41,530 --> 00:26:43,050

childhood and of all Russians.

00:26:43,689 --> 00:26:48,589

When I read this, I thought it was very interesting, and the connection I made was that maybe

00:26:48,589 --> 00:26:52,310

that's why McKee was appreciated in Russia, the black poet.

00:26:52,930 --> 00:27:03,150

I want to think that this brings in, even as one of the first, both of the people who comment

00:27:03,150 --> 00:27:13,209

on your book, talk about this new and like first perspective of this kind of McKee's work, and

00:27:13,209 --> 00:27:19,589

I thought how fascinating this is because this is a period of time when African-Americans in

00:27:19,589 --> 00:27:24,810

the whole were going out to different cultures and connecting.

00:27:25,589 --> 00:27:33,030

We start with, you know, we start with Frederick Douglass with his Irish connection, and of

00:27:33,030 --> 00:27:40,430

course the notable one there is Richard Wright at a time when, you know, the whole McCarthyism

00:27:40,430 --> 00:27:47,449

was moving in the U.S., and a number of African-Americans were associated or accused of association

00:27:47,449 --> 00:27:49,650

with Communism in those days.

00:27:50,069 --> 00:28:04,609

The red was a bad word in the U.S., and many of them fled to France,

and in fact, you know,

00:28:04,910 --> 00:28:12,150

Richard Wright wrote at that time that there is more,

00:28:14,829 --> 00:28:19,170

there was, what is it, more freedom or more racism?

00:28:21,949 --> 00:28:30,089

There is more racism in one block of the United States of America than in the whole of France,

00:28:31,050 --> 00:28:37,810

and of course the French loved that, you know, and I think, I think now learning about Claude

00:28:38,089 --> 00:28:46,349

McKee's, you know, connection with Russia, they found some kind of connection with these other

00:28:47,010 --> 00:28:57,170

other groups or cultures of people, and so my question would be is there any kind of Claude McKee association in Russia?

00:28:57,849 --> 00:29:03,890

Because in both these other cases that are used, I mean, in Richard Wright's case, not only

00:29:03,890 --> 00:29:10,150

in France, but also in Japan, they have a Richard Wright association that hold conferences and

00:29:10,150 --> 00:29:12,329

so on because of this common struggle.

00:29:13,489 --> 00:29:19,890

Not that much because, like, you know, they wrote a lot about him, like during 1922, 1923, in

00:29:19,890 --> 00:29:29,670

the newspapers, like, you know, but he denied communism, and then, you know, and he's popular

00:29:29,670 --> 00:29:34,729

because the Negroes in America, he actually wrote when he was in Russia, and that was, like,

00:29:34,729 --> 00:29:40,770

a forgotten publication that only, I think, in 1960s got translated from Russian into English,

00:29:40,869 --> 00:29:45,890

you know, the Negroes and about the life of African-American people, but they got disappointed

00:29:45,890 --> 00:29:54,050

with him because they wanted him to write in a certain way, to promote solidarity or communist

00:29:54,050 --> 00:29:59,329

ideas, you know, that's why they said, like, that a bunch of characters, like, the Soviet Union

00:29:59,329 --> 00:30:05,989

said that they were, like, not strong revolutionary characters that they wanted to see, you

00:30:05,989 --> 00:30:11,329

know, but what I argue in my book that within the Caribbean context, yes, you know, they are,

00:30:11,329 --> 00:30:14,650

you know, he's doing something, he's creating Caribbean literature.