



Machado de Assis: Multiracial Identity and the Brazilian Novelist

G. Reginald Daniel

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Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839-1908) was Brazil's foremost novelist of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a mulatto, Machado experienced the ambiguity of racial identity throughout his life. Literary critics first interpreted Machado as an embittered misanthrope uninterested in the plight of his fellow African Brazilians. By midcentury, however, a new generation of critics asserted that Machado's writings did reveal his interest in slavery, race, and other contemporary social issues, but their interpretations went too far in the other direction. G. Reginald Daniel, an expert on Brazilian race relations, takes a fresh look at how Machado's writings were inflected by his life—especially his experience of his own racial identity. The result is a new interpretation that sees Machado as endeavoring to transcend his racial origins by universalizing the experience of racial ambiguity and duality into a fundamental mode of human existence.



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