

Daniel, G. Reginald. *Machado de Assis: Multiracial Identity and the Brazilian Novelist*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State UP, 2012. Print.

In this smart, ambitiously interdisciplinary, and exhaustively researched book, G. Reginald Daniel, Professor of Sociology at UCSB and pioneer in the study of multiracial identity and experience from a transnational perspective, considers the life and work of Machado de Assis. It is a sweeping book that draws upon the vastness of Machadian studies, in which Daniel is clearly versed, along with the sociology of race and culture, literary history and periodization, and theories of modernity and postmodernism. In its engagement with this range of theoretical and disciplinary configurations, Daniel's book, organized into an introduction, nine chapters, and an epilogue co-authored with Gary L. Haddow, is in some senses two books in one, each with a distinct yet analogous argument. Each line of inquiry results in a significant and original contribution to Machadian studies. Combined, they position Daniel's book as the most thorough English-language treatment of the Brazilian writer's life and work since John Gledson's translation of Roberto Schwarz's *A Master on the Periphery of Capitalism* (Duke UP, 2001). Standing along with Earl Fitz's *Machado de Assis and Female Characterization* (Bucknell UP, 2014), and a welcome round of new translations, Daniel's book will help to reinvigorate and deepen Machado's reception among English-language readers and his stature among the major figures of world literature.

Comprising the first six chapters, the more substantial focus of Daniel's study considers Machado's life and work through the lens of race and the writer's critical engagement with slavery and racism. The first chapter provides a useful overview of racial formations in colonial and nineteenth-century Brazil and analyzes the social location of mulattoes and the dynamic conditions that enabled or impeded their mobility within the socio-cultural order of Rio de Janeiro. The second chapter further develops the backdrop for the focus on Machado to follow, and it stands on its own as a substantial contribution to the English-language bibliography on Brazilian literature from the nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries. Here, Daniel considers African, Brazilian, and specifically mulatto authorships in their range of positionings vis-à-vis

the dynamics between literary and aesthetic blackness and whiteness. He revisits the cases of Silva Alvarenga (1749-1814) and Caldas Barbosa (1740-1800) as examples of, respectively, “cultivated” and “vernacular” traditions, and, among those forging a “tradition of opposition,” Luís Gama (1830-1882), José do Patrocínio (1853-1905), and Lima Barreto (1881-1922). Over the next four chapters, Daniel considers Machado’s biography and his writings—including all of his novels and a broad selection of stories, essays, and poems—with the following question in mind: How did Machado publically and privately grapple with his own multiracial identity and experience and with racism and slavery as among the most consequential social justice issues of his day? Daniel addresses the question in two ways. He reviews the critiques, both contemporaneous and posthumous, of Machado’s supposed masking of his African heritage and insufficient engagement with abolitionist and anti-racist struggles. Rebutting these critiques, Daniel finds numerous counter-examples of Machado’s direct repudiation of slavery, particularly in his chronicles, though many of these were published under pseudonyms. With regard to his fiction and the relative paucity of identifiably Afro-descendent protagonists, Daniel partially cedes the point to Machado’s critics and then converts it into evidence of a larger critical project, which was to undermine dualistic forms of thinking, of which race is one particular manifestation. Daniel writes, “... I submit that Machado’s apparent lack of racial consciousness reflects his desire not to deny being a mulatto but to become ‘raceless’” (119). Rather than a case of passing or self-whitening, it is one of critical multiracial experience and “strategic antiessentialization” compatible with a “moderate Afrocentric perspective.” As Daniel sees it: “... [Machado] endeavored ... to become a “meta-mulatto,” that is, a mulatto whose writing grappled with the universal questions of duality and ambiguity in all human existence—miscegenation in a higher sense” (120-21). Machado’s critique of race is, in Daniel’s estimation, masterfully oblique and inscribed in a critique of modernity and its Eurocentric dichotomization of human identity and experience into mutually exclusive categories.

In the final three chapters and epilogue, Daniel considers Machado’s work in relation to debates on Brazilian literary independence. He then closely analyzes characterization, narrative point of view, and narrative structure in

the arc of Machado's novelistic output in light of aesthetic, formal, and ideological qualities identified with Romanticism and Realism-Naturalism. Daniel finds Machado's work defiant of easy categorization, and he offers a correction to views of an abrupt transition from an early Romantic phase to a later Realist posture. Daniel identifies the earlier novels instead with Romantic Realism and the later novels with an Impressionism that broke with the pure objectivism of Realism-Naturalism but that stopped short of a purely subjective posture. In both cases, Machado's work demonstrates a "both/neither" quality that confirms it as a pioneering instance of postmodern sensibility. While the issues of race and multiraciality are largely suspended in these chapters, they return periodically as causal factors in Machado's rejection of an either/or perspective in favor of a both/neither perspective. Daniel, now writing along with Had-dow, argues: "Machado's shared sensibility with Romantic Realist and Impressionist aesthetics reflects his broader experience of being *both* black and white, yet *neither*. By providing him with a sensitivity to the liminal space ... , this experience enhanced Machado's ability to convey shades of meaning when discussing issues ranging from slavery to national literature, literary aesthetics, and modernity" (238). This is a compelling argument that will almost certainly revive debates and inspire new readings of Machado's work. Beyond this, Daniel's book, with its exhaustive review of the trajectory of Machadian studies and its thorough reading of Machado's life and oeuvre, will stand for many years to come as an indispensable introduction and resource for Anglophone readers.

**Malcolm K. McNee**

*Smith College*