

Tragedy and the Tragic: Andrade's *Pedreira das Almas*

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The critics who have studied Jorge Andrade's *Pedreira das Almas* have either referred to the play as a tragedy or mentioned its tragic qualities, seeing similarities between it and Sophocles' *Antigone*. Sábato Magaldi, while not referring to generic classifications, does perceive in the work the same conflict which makes *Antigone* a tragedy:

As leis do direito natural, ou de família, ou religiosa, opõem-se às do Estado, como na *Antígona* de Sófocles: a permanência de um corpo insepulto leva a cidade a expulsar os esbirros do poder, numa revolta das convicções inatas contra o arbítrio dos mandantes.¹

Anatol Rosenfeld, who calls the work a tragedy "pelo estilo, pelo uso do coro e pela movimentação hierática,"² sees parallels between *Pedreira das Almas* and *Antigone* in that the female protagonist "assume em face da autoridade a mesma atitude inflexível da heroína grega," but with the basic difference that "o conteúdo da sua decisão é exatamente o contrário; ela não só não procura enterrar o irmão, mas insiste, por razões políticas e de lealdade aos vivos, em deixá-lo insepulto."³ Richard A. Mazzara speaks of the adaptation of ancient tragedy to Brazilian subjects in his discussion of the work and also concludes that its "form and style are tragic."⁴ His other remarks on the subject are based on the rules of classical tragedy—unity of action, time, and place—with no mention of tragic qualities other than the spirit of sacrifice in one of the characters. Like Anatol Rosenfeld and Richard A. Mazzara, Lourival Gomes Machado also sees the work as a tragedy but recognizes that "não poderá também conter-se no esquema rígido da tragédia clássica reduzida a conceitos básicos."⁵ He vaguely defines the work as Jorge Andrade's own brand of tragedy: ". . . em *A Moratória* fez tragédia pura e simplesmente, em *Pedreira das Almas* fez uma Tragédia, cabendo à crítica estabelecer até que ponto fez uma sua tragédia."⁶

Most of the above does not proceed from a systematic study of the work as a tragedy, since none defines the concept of the tragic nor follows rigorously any definition of the genre. Most of the critics focus on the historical aspects

of the work in relation to the entire cycle of plays, *Marta, a Árvore e o Relógio*, of which *Pedreira das Almas* is a part. This study will present a definition of tragedy and apply this to *Pedreira das Almas* to determine whether or not the tragic emerges in the work.

Although tragedy has long been a common term in the critical idiom of drama, there is little agreement as to its definition. The concept of the tragic sense of life and its concretization into the genre of tragedy has preoccupied literary scholars and philosophers since Aristotle first defined tragedy as drama which arouses pity and fear. Each age produced its own theories which critics of later ages have disputed and often invalidated, believing their own definitions more accurately described the concept and the genre. Later theorists, who based their work on Horace's *Ars Poetica* and on Aristotle, frequently concerned themselves more with elements such as the sense of decorum and the unities of place, time, and action. These features, exterior to the essence of the tragic itself, were ultimately codified into the rigid neoclassical doctrine which would dominate criticism and playwriting through the eighteenth century. Playwrights, disenchanted by the rigidity of the neoclassical mold, then turned to what has been labeled "bourgeois" or "domestic" tragedy, terms that better describe the content than the genre. This type of so-called tragedy, in its sentimentality and belief in poetic justice, rejects the inevitability of the tragic hero's destruction, preferring instead to affirm man's basic goodness and ability to change himself and the course of events in his life.

A different approach to the definition of the genre is to be found in Hegel's writings on the topic. Hegel reacted against the prevalent attitudes concerning tragedy as reflected in the bourgeois theatre, perceiving and defining the tragic as a conflict of ethical substance.⁷ The German philosopher formulated the tragic conflict in terms of his metaphysical principle of *Geist* which manifests itself in the universe in the process of two conflictive values (thesis-antithesis) involved in a struggle. The resolution is brought about when the exclusiveness of the claims of either side is denied and the values represented by both are reaffirmed (synthesis).

Max Scheler, following the phenomenological method of inquiry in his essay "On the Tragic," draws upon Hegel's theories and rejects those definitions formulated through inductive approaches. Scheler's objection to such approaches is that they assume that the essential features of the tragic, whether in content or form, may be drawn from those works long considered to be tragedies. Such an assumption "would presuppose that one knows beforehand what the essence of the tragic is, and not just what events are tragic."⁸ The tragic, in Scheler's view, is "an essential element of the universe itself,"⁹ independent of the art form, and of individual personal response and world view. Tragedy does not conform to metaphysical, religious, or moral views of any age. The tragic is a phenomenon which possesses its own invariable essential features and configuration. To emerge in the work of art, this configuration, consisting of the conflict of two absolute, positive values espoused consciously by individuals acting in a "god-like" manner, must be present. Because each side of the conflict adheres totally to its value, refusing to admit the validity of the other's claim, one or both sides is necessarily destroyed. The necessity of destruction, however, as

Scheler states, is "found in the conclusion of free acts,"¹⁰ and is above the causal necessity of deterministic factors such as environment or heredity. In other words, the catastrophe, while necessary, is unpredictable. Up to the final minutes before the catastrophe, "there must still remain one moment when everything—even by ideal calculation—could still turn out quite differently."¹¹

Each side, in claiming exclusiveness and adhering without compromise to what it considers a higher ideal, is ethically justified insofar as respective values are high and positive, but each is at fault in excluding the other. In such a situation the two sides are incompatible and collision is inevitable. The tragic flaw of the heroes lies not in the higher ideal to which they are committed, but in the blindness which makes them refuse to admit each other's validity. They are right from their own point of view but wrong in that they divide the ethical substance. Tragic guilt is a "guiltless guilt"; the characters act as they do for the sake of what they consider superior and just. Tragic guilt, as Scheler says, is "a kind for which no conceivable 'judge' can be found."¹² It is different from moral guilt, which is bound to a particular age or society.

The conflict of these mutually exclusive claims disrupts the harmony of man's ethical substance, and for this to be restored, the exclusiveness of both must be denied while their validity is reaffirmed. Tragic reconciliation, according to Hegel, is therefore the calm recognition that this is the way the universe is, and that such collisions and destruction are inevitable. The views of Hegel and Scheler discussed here will constitute the focus of our analysis of Jorge Andrade's work to determine the presence or absence of a tragic conflict.

Pedreira das Almas takes place in a historical setting—a small town in the state of Minas Gerais during the revolution of 1842 in which liberal forces struggled against the absolutism of the Brazilian monarchy. The town, which was once a prosperous mining center, is in a state of ruin and decline—the mines have been exhausted, there is no work for the people, and the government continues to impose taxes which the townspeople cannot pay. As the playwright indicates in his stage directions, the one setting used throughout the two acts underscores visually the impression of death and decadence: gray stone predominates as the primary material for such props as the facade of a church, tombs, statues, and a run-down colonial house. Reinforcing the sense of desolation, there stands out one lone tree: ". . . retorcida, enfezada, descreve uma curva como se procurasse, inutilmente, a direção do céu."¹³

The action of the play results from a number of conflicts and struggles among individuals who represent opposing views. The first conflict is between Urbana, the matriarch who steadfastly refuses to abandon the dying town, and Gabriel, a young idealistic revolutionary who promises to lead the inhabitants to new lands in the state of São Paulo where they might find a new life and brighter future, free of government oppression and the stagnation of the town. According to Anatol Rosenfeld, the conflict between these two characters—the tension between past-present, old-young, death-life—constitutes the central antagonism of the work.¹⁴ Their respective conflicting values occasion the tragic conflict that later emerges in the play. Urbana, the authority figure of the town, is totally and blindly devoted to *Pedreira das Almas* because of the importance she places on tradition, one's ancestors, and the past, all symbolized in

the town where the past and the dead predominate. Her dialogues and actions reveal her dedication to the town:

. . . não é pecado desejar o abandono dos mortos . . . ? (p. 82)

não há maior castigo que a morte de minha cidade. (p. 85)

Poderão viver . . . mas não à custa da destruição de Pedreira. (p. 85)

Não se pode cortar o passado. Ele nos acompanha para onde vamos. (p. 86)

Urbana refuses to allow her children (Mariana and Martiniano) to accompany Gabriel, and she has, as she says, maintained the town at a distance from the rest of the world. She stubbornly insists that one can always find work in Pedreira if one is willing to work and that revolution is an evil created by only a few people who do not respect the law. The matriarch refuses to see that the city no longer serves the living. She, therefore, cannot admit as valid Gabriel's views that the government is unjust and that the only escape from it and the town is to leave.

Gabriel, on the other hand, blindly refuses to accept Urbana's values of tradition and reverence for the past. He has personally suffered the injustices and cruelty of the government, having seen his family killed by a government-inspired slave revolt when he was a child. The town holds only these sad memories for him, and, in addition, he clearly recognizes that Pedreira can no longer provide any possibilities for living. To him Urbana represents all the stagnation and injustice because she is a symbol of the town:

. . . a ordem estabelecida aqui, é a ordem da senhora, não a minha. É por isto que odeio essas pedras. Estão contaminadas pelas leis que a senhora representa. Leis desses mortos. Eles também pertencem à senhora, não a mim. Sei o que eles significam. Pactuaram com todas as injustiças cometidas neste vale em nome da sua lei e da sua ordem. (p. 87)

The entrance of government troops in pursuit of Gabriel interrupts the conflict between him and Urbana, and the second major struggle develops: the conflict between Urbana and Vasconcelos, the representative of the State. Gabriel is hidden in the caves beneath the town, with Urbana promising not to denounce him if her daughter Mariana, who is in love with Gabriel, will give up her plans of leaving with him. Martiniano, Urbana's son, is brought in and Vasconcelos attempts to use him to extract from the matriarch the location of Gabriel. While Urbana is torn between handing over Gabriel to the troops and obtaining her son's release, Martiniano escapes and is shot. The grieving mother, rather than assuming any tragic proportions in the conflict, dies spiritually ("parece ter ultrapassado o limite da dor humana"—p. 96) and never utters another word. She remains in a state of shock, not even protesting the fact that Vasconcelos will not allow the body of Martiniano to be buried. She is led into the church where she dies physically while embracing her son.

The daughter Mariana rises and assumes Urbana's role in the conflict, which most critics see as the parallel between *Pedreira das Almas* and *Antigone*. The conflict in which Mariana and Vasconcelos are antagonists, however, does not attain the dimensions of a tragic conflict. While Mariana is devoted to ideals that would be considered high and positive in the Schelerian and Hegelian sense, Vasconcelos is not. Unlike Creon, he is not the State; he is simply an

agent of the State, performing a duty, with no particular commitment to it. As he himself says, "Não estou aqui para dar explicações. Sou representante da lei e da justiça e vim restabelecê-las" (p. 93). The State which he represents has been portrayed as unjust and oppressive, thus negating the idea that Vasconcelos is committed to a real value. Also, unlike his heroic Greek counterpart, he shows himself to be a coward. In the highly dramatic scene in which Mariana challenges him to enter the church if he wishes to take Gabriel, Vasconcelos falters, orders his soldiers to enter, and finally does so himself when they refuse. He rapidly exits after seeing the dead Urbana clutching her son's decomposing body. The soldiers revolt and Vasconcelos renounces his stand, saying simply that he will leave and report Gabriel dead.

As Lourival Gomes Machado points out in his discussion of *Pedreira das Almas*, Vasconcelos does not participate in the tragic conflict; he is simply a catalytic agent creating the circumstances out of which a tragic conflict will develop. Machado does not, however, pursue the line further and does not state who the participants in the tragic conflict are.¹⁵ Although correct in eliminating the Mariana-Vasconcelos conflict as the tragic conflict, Machado, as do other critics, misses the point in assuming that the tragic conflict is between two characters. The conflicting high values are not embodied in this work in two separate characters; on the contrary, the clash is an internal one, and both superior qualities conflict within Mariana.

According to Scheler, such a circumstance represents the clearest manifestation of tragedy:

It would be most tragic if the same power which has brought either itself or another object to a very high positive value becomes its destroyer—especially if this takes place in the very act of its achievement.

If we are observing a certain action which is realizing a high value, and then see in that same action that it is working towards the undermining of the very existence of the being it is helping, we receive the most complete and the clearest of tragic impressions.¹⁶

This is the case in *Pedreira das Almas*. In Mariana, who shares the same high positive ideals as those held by both Gabriel and Urbana, these cherished ideals enter into the tragic conflict, with each claim refuting the validity of the other and dividing the ethical substance. This situation, which comes to exist within Mariana, is established early in the play when Gabriel and Urbana conflict. It is then slowly developed throughout the action of the work, culminating with the catastrophe. In Act I, Scene I, Mariana and Gabriel are in love and planning to leave the town for the new lands. At this point we see that for Mariana what Gabriel represents has assumed more importance than their love:

MARIANA: Já não sei a quem mais amo: a ti, ou à imagem do teu trabalho no planalto distante. (p. 88)

Gabriel represents something that Mariana considers an ideal, a superior quality. She is committed to what he stands for and would renounce her own happiness to protect it. This is emphasized in the same scene when she says that she cannot accompany him because she would contaminate his dreams with her mother's hatred.

Mariana realizes that Gabriel's dream is not only for the two of them, but for all the inhabitants of Pedreira das Almas:

MARIANA: Não te faria feliz, Gabriel.

GABRIEL: Por que não?

MARIANA: Levaria para as tuas terras, para ti, todo este ódio. (pp. 87-88)

Yet she still defends her mother's stance when Gabriel accuses Urbana for her daughter's refusal to leave with him:

É injusta, mas é minha mãe. (p. 88)

Mariana's insistence on Urbana's blessing reflects the young woman's sense of family obligation, filial duty, and respect for her mother:

Não posso acompanhar Gabriel sem a benção da senhora. Procure compreender, mamãe! (p. 85)

Não quero partir, mamãe, sem a benção da senhora. (p. 87)

At this point, however, Mariana still struggles with her mother, defending Gabriel and attempting to explain to Urbana the importance of what he represents for the entire town:

Injustiça diz respeito a todos! Estão confiscando fazendas e prendendo famílias inteiras. Dobram, pelo terror, uma gente já empobrecida e sem defesa. As famílias de Pedreira também podem ser atingidas. (p. 84)

As the troops encircle the town, Mariana's total commitment to what Gabriel represents becomes more pronounced. She now has to make a decision: to stay in the town or to leave with Gabriel. She knows that if she stays, Gabriel will not leave. The value he incarnates will be destroyed if he remains and is arrested, and the entire town will suffer with Gabriel's destruction. Thus, Mariana, as we see in Act I, Scene II, prepares to leave with the young man. This decision changes with the arrival of Vasconcelos, but Mariana's commitment to what she believes in remains the same. When she assumes her mother's role as spokesperson for Pedreira das Almas and has to decide whether or not to reveal Gabriel's hiding place, she stands firm in her commitment to Gabriel's ideals, the same ideals that had occasioned the conflict between mother and daughter before Martiniano's death. At that time, as Urbana wavered between protecting her son and denouncing Gabriel, Mariana told her that she did not have the right to make a choice. And to Vasconcelos, she defended her right in assuming her choice of values:

Ninguém tem o direito de nos exigir uma delação, mesmo em nome da ordem pública . . . O que não pode é nos impor um ato indigno. (p. 93)

This clearly establishes Mariana's commitment to the value she sees in Gabriel and his dream, and her right to stand by ". . . o direito de saber o que é melhor para nós" (p. 108). When Mariana assumes Urbana's role, she completely renounces what Urbana represents. Her position is even more firm, and she never once falters or vacillates in her stance. She allows her brother's body to go unburied, violating family obligations and religious principles. She has selected a higher value: freedom for the individual to choose what is best for himself,

which is the freedom to resist oppression of an unjust government and the freedom to leave Pedreira das Almas for a better life. Mariana knows that there will be a price to pay, as she says to Vasconcelos:

O senhor tem espadas . . . nós, aquilo que assassinos de sua espécie desconhecem: respeito à liberdade. É o que Gabriel representa para nós. Pagaremos por ele, qualquer preço. (p. 97)

This is repeated later when Mariana emerges from the church where she has watched Urbana die over the body of the unburied Martiniano. Mariana again confronts Vasconcelos, who is demanding that Urbana denounce Gabriel. The town is under a state of siege—the roads have been blocked, the men have been arrested, and there is a curfew for the women. However, Mariana, facing the threat of her own arrest, does not falter or give in. Again she responds for the entire town, but now she realizes that the price to be paid is her own, one that is far dearer than any of the other restrictions thus far imposed. In the following dialogue, she affirms her belief in Gabriel's ideals, while accepting full responsibility for her ethical choice:

. . . Gabriel é a única saída deste túmulo imenso que seu governo fez de Pedreira das Almas. Faça cumprir suas leis, já que não pode fazer os mortos reviverem. Este é o preço, senhor. O meu e o seu. O senhor não terá nunca Gabriel, porque matou Martiniano . . . e eu . . . porque deixei Martiniano e minha mãe morrerem. (p. 109)

The price that she must pay for her commitment is another aspect of the tragic, one which, as Eugene Falk has shown, may be used to measure the true tragic dimensions of the hero. This aspect is concerned with renunciation and self-sacrifice, which Falk characterizes as a "tragic focus," and which we may aptly apply to Mariana and her situation. The self-sacrificial act, according to this critic, must be accompanied by the suffering of renunciation, and it must not simply be an act performed for self-glorification or personal redemption. The act is truly self-sacrificial under the following circumstances:

To do what one believes to be one's duty is a virtuous act, to do it in the face of danger is heroic; the act is tragic if the virtuous and heroic act leads to an unavoidable doom which is clearly envisaged by the hero who renounces the bliss of earthly life, who tears himself away from the lure of living for no other reason than to fulfill his duty. Complete renunciation and complete fulfillment of duty are the essential elements of the tragic . . .¹⁷

Mariana's act is tragic in that there is a deep sense of loss while there is still strength and firmness in her commitment to what she considers to be a higher ideal. In protecting Gabriel and what he represents for her, Mariana is at the same time renouncing her own personal happiness and future with the man she loves. And she renounces her right to participate in the ideal that she has defended. She does this fully aware that she will pay the price. Her allegiance to what she sees as something superior may be measured by her self-sacrificial act in renouncing all worldly aspirations. There is no self-glorification nor personal redemption in what she does. She is fulfilling the promise made to her mother when Gabriel was hidden from the troops:

. . . Gabriel é tudo na minha vida. Para mim . . . bastará saber que vive. Não sairei de Pedreira. Morrerei aqui. Ficarei, aconteça o que acontecer. Juro, mamãe. (p. 90)

The priest offers to release Mariana from the vow, but she steadfastly and unflatteringly refuses. She knows that the debt to be paid is to remain in the town, caring for the dead as Urbana did. She is no longer free to leave, as she tells Gabriel, and he is no longer free to choose to remain. Both have their duties that they must fulfill:

MARIANA: Gabriel! Queríamos partir livres. Hoje não somos mais. Não podes abandonar o povo, nem eu Pedreira. (p. 112)

MARIANA: Nossos mortos não podem ser abandonados.

GABRIEL: Não sabes mais pensar a não ser em mortos?!

MARIANA: Vivo conforme meus princípios.

GABRIEL: Não eram princípios teus, há poucos dias atrás.

MARIANA: São agora. Quando menos esperamos, ficamos presos a compromissos superiores aos nossos sentimentos.

GABRIEL: Que compromissos?

MARIANA: Tu, com o povo que agora tem o direito de partir. Eu . . . com os mortos de Pedreira. Eles precisam de mim! Sei que Pedreira não morrerá enquanto eu estiver aqui. (p. 113)

The destruction of one of the values held by Mariana is inevitable under the circumstances created by the conflict. Honoring one's family ties and their implied obligations and religious principles would have meant the destruction of the ideal of freedom to choose what is best for the individual. In protecting Gabriel from the State, Mariana chooses what she considers to be a superior value. With the danger ended, she pays the price of both claims and the restoration of the ethical substance. Gabriel is free to leave with the inhabitants of the town, and Mariana will remain in Pedreira das Almas to fulfill the role of her late mother.

A gradual transformation in Mariana's physical appearance throughout the play visually portrays the tragic conflict in her. In Act I, Scene I, she appears dressed in white as she leaves the church and looks out over the valley. As the work progresses she loses the youthful, innocent look and slowly assumes the appearance of Urbana, who dresses in dark grays which blend with the color of the rocks that are the dominant feature of the town's scenery. When she decides to leave her brother's body unburied, Mariana is "transfigurada," and after emerging from the church to face Vasconcelos for the last time, she is dressed in mourning almost identical to that of her mother: "Mariana envelheceu e sua semelhança com Urbana aumentou: o porte e o andar são quase idênticos" (p. 103). In the last moments of the play, she is, as Urbana has been, "distante de tudo," and makes one last movement, symbolic of her role: "Mariana volta-se e olha o vale . . . entra na igreja" (p. 115).¹⁸

We may conclude then that following the definition of the concept of the tragic that we have chosen, Jorge Andrade's *Pedreira das Almas* is a tragedy. The configuration of two high positive values in conflict and the destruction of one, as defined by Hegel and elaborated by Scheler, is present in the work. The

conflict, however, is not present where most critics have indicated in their parallels drawn between the play and *Antigone*. Rather than emerging in the conflict between the values of State and Individual represented by two separate characters, the tragic conflict is an internal one in the character of Mariana, who has to choose between family obligations and love of freedom. When her choice is made, one of the possibilities is destroyed, and the ethical substance is restored only when the two are no longer in conflict, i.e. when Mariana remains in Pedreira das Almas to care for the dead and Gabriel leaves for the new lands leading the living of the town to freedom. Mariana's choice reflects yet another aspect of tragedy that reinforces our interpretation of her as a tragic figure in the play; in giving up Gabriel, she renounces her right to participate in the freedom that he represents and that she holds as a high, positive value. This action, which Eugene H. Falk defines as tragic renunciation, is another focus on the tragic that is brought out in our analysis of *Pedreira das Almas* and strengthens our interpretation based on Hegel and Scheler of the work as a tragedy.

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Notes

1. *Panorama do Teatro Brasileiro* (São Paulo: Difusão Européia do Livro, 1962), p. 124.
2. "Visão do ciclo," in Jorge Andrade, *Marta, a Árvore e o Relógio* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1970), p. 615.
3. Rosenfeld, p. 607.
4. "The Theatre of Jorge Andrade," in Leon F. Lyday and George W. Woodyard, eds., *Dramatists in Revolt* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1976), p. 208.
5. "Pedreira das Almas," in Andrade, *Marta, a Árvore e o Relógio*, p. 621.
6. Gomes Machado, p. 619.
7. Hegel's writings on tragedy have been gathered into one volume by Anne and Henry Paolucci, *Hegel on Tragedy* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962). One of the most illuminating and useful explanations of Hegel's theories is A. C. Bradley's essay "Hegel's Theory of Tragedy," published in the appendix of this volume. He captures in a few words Hegel's concept of tragic conflict, values, and ethical substance; this concept will be elaborated by Max Scheler later: "The reason why the tragic conflict thus appeals to the spirit is that it is itself a conflict of the spirit. It is a conflict, that is to say, between powers that rule the world of man's will and action—his 'ethical substance.' The family and the state, the bond of parent and child, of brother and sister, of husband and wife, of citizen and ruler, or citizen and citizen, with the obligations and feelings appropriate to these bonds; and again the powers of personal love and honour, or of devotion to a great cause or an ideal interest like religion or science or some kind of social welfare—such are the forces exhibited in tragic action . . ." (p. 369).
8. "On the Tragic," in John Gassner and Edward Quinn, eds., *The Reader's Encyclopedia of World Drama* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1969), p. 1009.
9. Scheler, p. 1008.
10. Scheler, p. 1012.
11. Scheler, p. 1012.
12. Scheler, p. 1013.
13. Andrade, *Marta, a Árvore e o Relógio*, p. 75. Subsequent references to *Pedreira das Almas* are to this edition.
14. Rosenfeld, p. 602.
15. Gomes Machado, p. 621.
16. Scheler, p. 1011.

17. Eugene H. Falk, *Renunciation as a Tragic Focus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), p. 33.

18. Gabriel, if he were better developed by the playwright, would also qualify for the role of tragic hero. He suffers an internal conflict of two high positive values: duty to lead the people of Pedreira das Almas to freedom and his love for Mariana. He has to choose, and in so doing, he has to renounce his own personal happiness with Mariana for what he considers to be a superior duty. Gabriel, however, remains basically secondary in terms of tragic character when compared to Mariana, whom the dramatist chooses to develop completely in this role. Gabriel is simply an echo reinforcing Mariana's tragic situation.