

Elke Marhöfer. "Nicolás Guillén Landrián." OEI: On Film 69-70 (2015); 452-457.

When we looked into the film archive of the *Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* (Institute for Cinematic Arts and Industry, in short: ICAIC) in Havana, the images from the times of the Cuban revolution were tempting: the struggle in the Sierra Maestra mountains, the battle of Santa Clara, the joyful entry into the city of Havana, the innovative social experiments that followed, the charismatic speeches of Fidel, the concerned humor and sexiness of Che and Camilo, all this is still stunning – yet, we were captivated by “another Cuba,” a Cuba somewhat on the margins of the hurricane. In the archive we discovered the works of Nicolás Guillén Landrián, who wanted to be remembered as “a black guy, six feet tall, pleasant, intelligent, affectionate with everything you can be affectionate with.”¹ Livio Delgado, a cinematographer who shot the first five films with Landrián, describes him as “a bandit filmmaker or a filmmaker bandit,” infamous for his crinkled outfit combined with “sandals made from rubber tire by the Vietnamese.”² Landrián’s work used to be very little known but recently got re-discovered and received more attention. In 2011 the International Film Festival Yamagata in Japan held the first retrospective followed by the Courtisane Festival in Ghent and others. Fortunately most of Landrián’s films are now available on wellknown online platforms.

Nicolás Guillén Landrián’s formal approach is deeply embedded in European avant-garde, a film practice that always understood itself as transcending borders first of genre and narration, later class and identity: “at the ICAIC all the filmmakers were intent on making avant-garde cinema, just imagine... It wasn’t only me, everyone tried in one way or another to approach cinema in this way.”³ Nourishing his work above all with microperception and experimental aesthetic, Landrián avoided biographical traces and narrations, direct connections to his own decent. He chose to make films about everything that concerned him but always careful not to get caught in “identity,” nevertheless persisting to be remembered as “a black guy.” From this multiplicity that might

¹ Nicolás Guillén Landrián, *Films from ostracism*, an interview by Manuel Zayas, Lara Petusky Coger and Alejandro Ríos, <http://manuelzayas.wordpress.com/2011/10/08/interview-nicolas-guillen-landrian/>

² Julio Ramos, “Filmar con Guillén Landrián. Entrevista a Livio Delgado,” in *LaFuga*, <http://www.lafuga.cl/filmar-con-guillen-landrian-entrevista-a-livio-delgado/663>

³ Nicolás Guillén Landrián, *Films from ostracism*, an interview by Manuel Zayas, Lara Petusky Coger and Alejandro Ríos, <http://manuelzayas.wordpress.com/2011/10/08/interview-nicolas-guillen-landrian/>

sometimes seem contradictory, he developed a specific (sometimes polemic) political and filmic sensitivity connected to his experience that allowed him to address his object of concern differently, blending his films with a knowledge foreign or even suspect to most of his colleagues at the ICAIC and elsewhere.

Facing many difficulties, the question of social racial formation wasn't in the focus of the Cuban revolutionary government from the beginning, yet it was vanguard in the process of decolonization – abroad and at home. After the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in Kongo in 1961, Cuba started to support the liberation wars in Angola, Guinea Bissau, Algeria, Sierra Leone and elsewhere.⁴ At home people recognized the inherited discrimination, raised awareness of the fact that most of the Cuban poor were dark-skinned and took measures against the discrimination. The government released positions in state enterprises and administration; encouraged writers, anthropologists and filmmaker of all colors, like Bernabé Hernández, Miguel Barnet, Alejo Carpentier, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, and Santiago Villafuerte to explore racial constructions that lead to bias and discrimination. Along with these actions, it supported young Afro-Cubans to enter the higher education system.⁵ Sara Gómez and Nicolás Guillén Landrián were among those (receiving film training at the ICAIC with Joris Ivens and Theodor Christensen) in the 1960s, followed by Sergio Giral in the 1970s and Gloria Rolando in the 1980s. Beside his teaching Joris Ivens made two films in Cuba with assistance of Landrián: *Carnet De Viaje* (Travel Notebook, 1961, 34 minutes, 35 millimeter) and *Pueblo Armado* (A People In Arms, 1961, 35 millimeter), both were censored in France but circulated in a censored form in different cine-clubs.⁶

Nicolás Landrián's most discussed work is *Coffea Arábica* (1968, 18 minutes, 35 millimeter),⁷

⁴ Like Equatorial Guinea, Somalia, Algeria and Tanzania. Many African revolutionaries took Cuba as a model for their struggle against colonial repression. After 27 years of imprisonment in South Africa Nelson Mandela dedicated his first foreign visit to Cuba. He wanted to express his gratitude to Fidel Castro and the Cubans' support in the fight against Apartheid.

⁵ One should bear in mind that public access to universities started much later in the European countries, and even now cannot be taken for granted. Today entry might not be restricted by the markers of ethnicity, gender or class, but by the demand for competitive useful knowledge that lives up to a capital related evaluation system, ostracizing and leaving out many who aren't compatible. For deeper insight see Isabelle Stengers & Vinciane Despret's recent publication *Women Who Make a Fuss* (2014).

⁶ During our research in the archives of the ICAIC in 2011, the Cinemateca de Cuba, Holland Film and the Dutch Embassy in Havana organized a Joris Ivens retrospective at the Ciné Chaplin in Havana showing seven films including his two Cuban ones.

⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=em-2nq9aopU>

also the first work commissioned by ICAIC about an agricultural project, a coffee plantation belt around Havana. An experimental and research based documentary that, by focusing on coffee explains the entire history of the Caribbean island. The film distances itself from a progress-oriented economy, explaining the coffee production process rather unrefined, but instead portraying it's ecological burdens, it's race and class antagonisms inherited from colonial plantation agriculture carried on into the current industrialized monoculture. The film has been reviewed and appreciated as it employs a distinct militant film language by bringing together a variety of different sources and colliding independent shots into a "nervous montage" similar to Santiago Álvarez's *Now* (1965, 5 minutes, 35 millimeter).⁸ It is also admired by some critics owing to the fact that it came out ironic and critical towards the government's use of incentives in order to increase economic productivity as a major means of happiness. Regardless of the greatness of the work, I would like to focus attention to Landrián's minor films, less explicit and bold, but still fearless, less caught up in grand maneuvers of politics to leave enough space for individual singularities (including himself) to undo the compositions imposed.

Before entering the film school Landrián had studied social science, which might be an explanation for why his film works convey the impression of being anthropological accounts. His first film *En Un Barrio Viejo* (In an Old Neighborhood, 1963, 9 minutes, 35 millimeter)⁹, shot under the influence of *neorealism* and *cinéma vérité*, begins by contrasting revolutionaries marching in line with people dancing, playing chess or just strolling the streets. In a sort of dialectical and naturalist manner the film juxtaposes class, gender, ethnic and religious differences by emphasizing distinct differences of singular persons and their activities in the neighborhood. Always avoiding interviews, making use of close-ups, still-photography and a hand-held camera, neither choppy, nor smoothed out, the film traces or even mimics maneuvers and movements of the various people, and certainly takes side with "the poor," bringing to attention their reserved gestures and almost invisible signals, but never explaining what has caused their poverty. Affectionate as Landrián had intended, but not nostalgic nor melancholic. Employing a well recognizable montage of juxtaposition and proximity, the film still seems to be more of an overwhelming commitment to openness than a critical reflection. The last scene is a long take on a *rumba* celebration for the dead. A *rumba* is more than a dance and still just a dance, a modern Cuban invention brought about by

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQ6c5n1ycoE>

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVw-bqpraYI>

colonialism and slavery.

One can certainly draw a link from *En Un Barrio Viejo* and his second film *Los del Baile* to *pM* (Pasado Meridiano/Post Meridiem, 1961, 13 minutes, 16 millimeter).¹⁰ *pM* was made three years earlier by Alberto Sabá Cabrera Infante and Orlando Jiménez Leal. Entirely shot at night without additional lighting, but with sensitive film material and two lightweight cameras, *pM* depicts people taking the ferryboat from Regla to the harbor district bordering with Old Havana, diving into the bars and cafes, getting drunk from music, booze, fighting and dancing, and afterwards returning back home by boat in the morning hours. As simple and beautiful in its formal language *pM* describes what it pictures, that is to say, “the pleasures of the poor,” not in an affirmative manner, but rather in contrast, somehow cynically. It might be that the filmmaker originally did not intend to portray the “uselessness” of the people with the camera’s distanced view, as the film seems to affectionately enjoy the party, even though it presents the dancers with the a sober authority. The people, however, don’t want to know, or don’t seem to care about the acidness of the observers with their cameras. One might probably see a relation to John Cassavetes’s feature film *Shadows* (1959, 87 minutes, 35 millimeter) that was just released a year earlier. Despite the fact that both films are formal experimentations converged with the motif of interracial relationships, *Shadows* spells out the contradictions and entanglements in detail, whereas *pM* evokes the impression that race becomes “the” scheme to link different existences, which can still be considered as a form of racism. *pM* was broadcasted on TV in January 1961, but then seized by the revolutionary government and banned from projection in theatres, where it probably would have reached a wider audience, since in the 60s TV wasn’t as common yet. The ban appalled and shocked the Cuban cultural producers and Fidel Castro responded to the conflict with his speech *The Words to the Intellectuals* delivered in June 1961 and the well known declaration: “Within the Revolution, everything. Against the Revolution, nothing.” This was not only a prediction directed toward the artists and intellectuals, it ought to define the entire Cuban policy. However, in the same speech, Castro rejects Soviet strictures on the arts proclaiming, “our enemies are capitalists and imperialists, not abstract art.” Not concerned with a socialist iconography Cuban artists always appropriated all forms of expression and creativity.¹¹ If the ban wasn’t posed on *pM* for being abstract, one could speculate, that it came as a result of its lack of didacticism, or its cynical aftertaste. In Cuba and

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XupwIWqsxxU>

¹¹ Please see Lucy Lippard’s recent article “From the Archives: Art from Cuba,” in *Art in America*, January 15, 2015.

elsewhere it certainly fuelled the discussion of the time.

En Un Barrio Viejo wasn't suppressed as *pM* was. While it received an honorary mention at the festival in Krakow, Poland and a prize in Tours, France, it earned a weighing critique by Castro, who called it frenchified. To be connected to the *French New Wave* is a scathing judgment for anyone who sincerely wants to make films. Castro's assessment was a strong blow but it corresponded with the urgencies of the 1960s and certainly was in tune with the *Left Bank* of the New Wave filmmakers such as Agnès Varda, Chris Marker, Alain Resnais, Marguerite Duras, Jean Rouch and even Jean-Luc Godard, who became impatient with the conformity of the New Wave, demanding a deeper engagement with the political left, moving for collaborative film work. As a result Landrián became more politicized and increasingly applied his critique towards the revolutionary government's demand for economical productivity, not bringing about joy and contentedness, but mere functionality, so that in "the year of agriculture" Landrián unexpectedly made a film about dancers – *Los del Baile (Dancers, 1965, 6 minutes, 35 millimeter)*.¹²

1965 was a tipping point in Cuban history. Like many other countries Cuba introduced the economical model of the Soviet five-year plan and began to enforce the call for productiveness. Every person of employable age had to work by law. The *Prospective Sugar Plan* for the first five years aimed to harvest 10 million tons of sugar by 1970. Chris Marker and Valérie Mayoux made a film about the effort from material shot by Cuban directors and the ICIAC: *La Bataille des dix Millions (Cuba: Battle of the 10.000.000, 1971, 58 minutes)*. It begins with Chris Marker's critique of the European left for turning its back on Cuba because things got more serious and less experimental, for forgetting the US-Embargo, the Bay of Pigs Invasion, the expulsion from the Organization of American States (OAS), the Cuban missiles-crisis and so forth. Despite of the huge government mobilization, the battle wasn't successful and the ten million mark was not reached. One crucial scene in the film is an excerpt of Fidel Castro's speech from 24th September 1970, where he reveals a detailed analysis of the economical objectives and their failings, accepting the responsibility for the unachieved goals. The plan concerned not only sugar, but also meat, poultry and fish, cement, steel bars, fertilizers, farm machinery, nickel, electric power, transportation and housing, paper and cardboard, beer and bottles, tires and batteries, leather footwear and rayon, fabrics and garments, toothpaste and soaps, bread and crackers, beans and edible fats, cigars and cigarettes. Each item is discussed in detail. In this extraordinary speech he questions, or rather auto-

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7FEGOUT6-Yw>

critiques the demands exercised by the revolutionary government on the people to accomplish the *Great Leap Forward*. Castro seems pinned up between the goal of distributing wealth equally and the common policy of competition between nations and ideologies. A competition that until today encourages the development of enforced productivity, exploiting the earth and its inhabitants. For a while the Cuban government was openly discussing which system should encourage the workers' productivity – moral or economical incentives. In 1966 the revolutionary government, supported by most of the intellectuals, decided for moral incentives, since the model of economic incentives remained unsuccessful in the Soviet Union.

In his recent work Diedrich Diederichsen suggests the practices of hiding from enforced productivity and functionality as a specific form of *hibernation* “based not on political action but on the constant activity of libidinous desire.”¹³ Diederichsen refers to a communiqué by the *Situationist International* titled *Geopolitics of Hibernation* that analyses the “total surveillance of production and consumption,”¹⁴ and ways to escape it. The communiqué was published in 1962, so one could speculate that Landrián knew it, since *Los del Baile* would certainly affirm a revolution born from experimenting with existence as it supports solitary and collective daydreaming, and imagination. It gathers from the streets of Havana what cannot be found in the productive world, what is missing or hidden from it. Dance in *Los del Baile* is a day- and a nighttime experience, it trespasses the separation of public and private and doesn't restrain itself to designated areas and circumstances, interrupts work and continues to enter the homes. Dance, or just *rumba* is charged. The flying zoom of the camera becomes the all-seeing-eye of the Santería, it flashes over an image of Fidel Castro next to an image of a young Afro-Cuban soldier, a mode of application Landrián uses in a couple of films, referencing the revolution as an integral and vital part of Afro-Cuban life, but each time giving it a different connotation. One cherished part in the *Los del Bailes*' collection features a performance by Pello el Afrokán. Pello had developed an extraordinary style of music deriving from conga and rumba, which he titled *Mozambique* named after a small country that had not yet been recognized, but that soon everybody would know about. A year later the first guerrilla campaigns resisting the Portuguese colonial occupation of Mozambique started. In 1965 Fidel Castro personally asked Pello to compose a *Mozambique* to support the *Prospective Sugar Plan* – to

¹³ Diedrich Diederichsen, *Polyphilo's Dream* in Frieze, Issue 122, April 2009, http://www.frieze.com/issue/article/polyphilos_dream/

¹⁴ *Situationist International*, *Geopolitics of Hibernation*, published by *Bureau of Public Secrets*, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/7.hibernation.htm>

sing songs of sugar cane and to work on plantations – *un mozambique para la caña*. Castro probably aimed for a fusion of music and production, to exchange the dancer with the worker, to wake up those in hibernation.¹⁵

Trying to get away from the rather controlled social environment of the city, we drove down to Baracoa, the eastern part of the island and started to work on our film *prendas–ngangas–enquisos–machines* where Landrián had filmed *Ociel del Toa* (Ociel of the Toa River, 1965, 16 minutes, 35 millimeter), where the river meets the ocean. Far from Havana and even more distant from the strive for political progress and modernization, Landrián filmed the river, the people, their work and leisure. He lived with the farmers, depicting with a subtle charm, nearly without commentary what he experienced: the preparation of food, the birth of a child, a funeral procession, hairdressing. He follows a young boy, Ociel, while working on the river, going to a cockfight, a socialist education program, and to a dance. But Landrián did not merely observe the life of others, he also initiated events, such as the dance party at Thomas' house or the lunch with roasted pork and rice. He depicts everyday life passing by in a balanced, flirtatious manner, always aware of the physical impact images have. He often shows close-ups of body parts and allows direct looks into the camera. His camera frequently remains in an instinctive, intruding position, building upon the affective components the camera is able to animate when confronting humans and nonhumans with its presence. Later Landrián said he had a hard time to follow the screenplay, which had been approved (but not commissioned) by the ICAIC – not because he wanted to subvert it, but because it was difficult to follow prior intentions.¹⁶

One obscure and rather puzzling film made in Baracoa is *Reportaje* (Reportage, 1966, 9 minutes, 35 millimeter).¹⁷ Leaving open what is being reported, it starts with something that resembles a church or funeral procession. Women wearing headscarves, a coffin is being carried. The camera behaves fairly unconventional for the occasion, flirting with the women, causing open laughter. Some manage to hide their expressions behind handkerchieves, while it remains unclear if they smile or cry, and then, somehow, the funeral procession turns into a manifestation. Marching people carry signs that say: “E.P.D. DON IGNORANCIA” (R.I.P. Don Ignorance) and “CAMPELINO ...

¹⁵ Later Pello appeared in the first scene of *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (Memories of Underdevelopment, 96 min, 1968) by Tomás Gutiérrez Alea—the inspiration that *Los del Baile* gave to the introduction scene is notable.

¹⁶ The film won the first prize at the International Film festival of Valladolid, SEMINCI in 1966.

¹⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6FF2kC8tj0o>

COMPROMISO ... SALUDAMOS LA PLENARIA ... CUMPLIR TODAS LAS

METAS ...” (Peasants... Commitment... We welcome the plenary... Fulfill all goals...). Now it becomes clear that this is a mobilization meeting, aiming at the installment of moral incentives to enhance the efficiency of the peasants’ work performance through honorable mentioning. It is safe to say that the increased pressure from the ambitious five-year plan, combined with the alienation caused by the new gigantic centrally run state farms probably led to reservations and maybe even refusals among the peasants rather than an improvement of their work performance. However, the film keeps its ambiguity between affinity and playfully questioning the event. Under José Martí and Lenin’s piercing eyes, the coffin turns out to be a paper box and a collective ritual to exorcise unawareness and laziness starts to happen. The puppet, “Don Ignorancia” is being burned. Later on there is eating, drinking, celebrating, dancing. Again the camera follows the movements of the dancers and their facial expressions for several minutes. Rumba and conga are superimposed by modern classical music (or the other way around), neither settling into one tonal register, nor merging the components into a transcultural syncretic aesthetics. Finally focusing on a young dancing woman, holding her gaze, the camera becomes possessive, trance like, unable to move on to other dancers, unable to let (her) go.

Dancing in a state of trance, hair dressing and straightening are returning motifs in Landrián’s films. In *Retornar a Baracoa* (Return to Baracoa, 1966, 15 minutes, 35 millimeter)¹⁸ he devotes a long sequence to a young Afro-Cuban woman winding her hair on big curlers while listening to a telenovela accompanied by a waltz on the radio. Depicting African hair styling in the early 1960s could be read as a counteraction against the then prevailing dogma that white skin color and hair structure was more attractive, which is why many Afro-Americans eventually stopped straightening their hair. Yet in Cuba in the early 1960s, this subversive practice was kind of twisted. While Afro-Cubans with straightened hair were in fact seen as revolutionary, wearing an afro or dreadlocks was labeled as counter-revolutionary. On the other side, white revolutionaries like Che, Camilo, Fidel and others sported “natural outfits” as if they had just returned from the Sierra Maestra with substantial beards and long hair for the entire decade. However, by the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s this changed with many Afro-Cubans starting to have afros and dreads (which some believe was a result from Angela Davis’ visit in 1972) and white Cubans cutting hair short to display a neat revolutionary appearance.

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0k7ZE1qVf60>

The revolution comes to Baracoa once a day by plane or is transmitted by radio. *Retornar a Baracoa* mixes animated still photography with filmed sequences. However, most of the time the camera movements are very small, showing steady images of people posing, working, standing still, confronting or ignoring the camera. The intertitles don't shy away from exposing the frustration about the experience of disconnectedness mixed with exhaustion caused by an abstract government and its continued demand for productivity. 'Baracoa has a new factory for chocolate.' The chocolate is in fact delicious, but in the film the achievement of the factory is not praised very much but contrasted with a tired looking assembly line worker. Was this the reason we supported the revolution for, to be dulled and bound up on a conveyor belt? Wasn't creativity and free time the real value of the revolution? At the end the film is cutting back and forth between a concrete mixer (laying a foundation) and people's faces with grave and serious expressions to the uncanny sound of flowing concrete. 'Baracoa is a prison with a park,' the intertitle states baldly, followed by a black screen with a speech by Fidel Castro urging the population to work more, and to support the new social revolution.

Landrián's films are extraordinary and probably hard to be accepted within the dominant discourse, but after *Retornar a Baracoa*, he was sent to the *Isla de Pinos* (today *Isla de la Juventud*, Isle of Youth) for "ideological reasons"¹⁹ to work on a chicken farm. Apparently affected by his own and the chickens imprisonment, "around a year later, he is said to have torched the chickens and/or the farm."²⁰ Suffering from schizophrenia he was hospitalized and received electroshock therapy, a procedure not uncommon at the time. Released from hospital he insisted on continuing to make films and the ICAIC, maybe regretful about the hard times Landrián had gone through, commissioned the earlier discussed *Coffea Arábica*. In an interview Landrián mentions that he was very happy about the film language he achieved with *Coffea Arábica*: "that was what concerned me most,"²¹ he emphasizes. Landrián's films challenged the confrontation of formal-experimental versus dialectical-pedagogic modes of operation, especially when crisscrossing these oppositions with an Afro-Cuban experience that in both conceptions is often rendered invisible. *Coffea Arábica*

¹⁹ Nicolás Guillén Landrián, *Films from ostracism*, an interview by Manuel Zayas, Lara Petusky Coger and Alejandro Ríos, <http://manuelzayas.wordpress.com/2011/10/08/interview-nicolas-guillen-landrian/>

²⁰ Florian Zeyfang, *Tears and Splice* in *Living Archive Catalogue* (Berlin: Arsenal, 2013), 240.

²¹ Nicolás Guillén Landrián, *Films from ostracism*, an interview by Manuel Zayas, Lara Petusky Coger and Alejandro Ríos, <http://manuelzayas.wordpress.com/2011/10/08/interview-nicolas-guillen-landrian/>

was first praised by the ICAIC. A poster was designed and a gala arranged, it was sent to the festival in Oberhausen in Germany. However, after the plantation project had failed, the film was marked as a mockery of the coffee program. Nicolás Landrián's final expulsion from the ICAIC came with *Taller de Línea y 18*, (The Workshop on Linea Street, 1971, 14 minutes, 35 millimeter),²² a film about a bus factory in Havana. The sound was too realistic to praise the conditions of production. Landrián recalled the events as follows:

In this film I used many recordings from the plant at high volume. These recordings are not on this copy, they were removed, they smoothed down the sound ...

Hammers, electronic equipment, the voices of the workers, all this mixed together bothered them a lot. At the preview, Julio García Espinosa²³ said he would only approve this documentary if the assembly plant workers accept it. And the workers went to the ICAIC, the plant administrators went, so did the union leaders, and they saw the documentary. And when Julio asked them, 'What do you think, the sound doesn't bother you?', he said, 'No, we approve of the documentary.' And the plant workers approved it, that's why they put it in theaters.²⁴

Again he was imprisoned and later, due to his schizophrenia, marginalized in Havana. After he refused to leave Cuba he was finally deported to Miami, where he made the film *Inside Downtown* (2001, 29 minutes, digital video). The film won a prize in Uruguay, but also there, he did not change his attitude and deliberately frustrating harmonies and familiar senses of narration. He died 2003 in Miami but since had not wished to be buried there, his body was brought back to Havana and buried at the Cristóbal Colon Cemetery.²⁵

It is easy to fall into antagonism, to critique and evaluate the revolution (especially from the outside), but why alienate from it even further? Often artists with a critical attitude towards their

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yrUIOZjYZd8>

²³ Julio García Espinosa was the director of the ICAIC at the time. He was a filmmaker and author of the famous essay *For an imperfect cinema*, which can be found at: <http://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC20folder/ImperfectCinema.html>

²⁴ Nicolás Guillén Landrián, *Films from ostracism*, an interview by Manuel Zayas, Lara Petusky Coger and Alejandro Ríos, <http://manuelzayas.wordpress.com/2011/10/08/interview-nicolas-guillen-landrian/>

²⁵ To name the main cemetery in Havana after Christopher Columbus can be understood as an expression of Cuban humour. It is the only place named after the "explorer."

government that is not allied with the 'West' are praised as 'dissidents,' a status Landrián seemed not to have desired. However, artists are not necessarily great political thinkers and often their political naivety is mixed with an economic rationalism. However, usually the melodrama spins around artistic freedom, freedom of speech or human rights, as if those were never subject to limits in the West. The critique is most often simplifying and renders every person who continues to work in Cuba, China or Russia an agent of corruption. Another critique often aims at Cuba's instable economy. However, this critique forgets that Cuba up until today succeed in abolishing hunger and malnutrition, which is not the case in many Latin American countries, provides a high standard of educational and medical care for the entire population with an infant mortality lower than in the United States. Certainly the countries economic growth is modest. However it managed to manoeuvre through the crisis of the 1990s when the Sowijet Union collapsed, partly because it change its agriculture from sugar plantation to individual and most often organic farming. Today there are more than hundred thousand farmers, and eighty percent of the agricultural production is organic. Compared to the period before the crisis, the food production had increased. (Footnote: For more information see Miguel Altieri and Fernando Funes-Monzote, 2012.) If at the beginning of the crisis Cuba had sold the land to foreign agricultural companies and stock holders to keep the sugar plantations running, this kind of agriculture-from-below would never have happened. In autumn 2006 *Living Planet Report* (a science based analysis that calculates the ecological footprint humans make on the planet, published every two years by the *World Wildlife Fund*) stated that Cuba was the only country in the world that met the criteria for sustainable development. According to the report, only Cuba managed to achieve a basic standard of living, human development (life expectancy, literacy, education) and GDP (purchasing power parity per capita) without exploiting resources to such a degree that they cannot be recovered naturally. (Footnote: World Wildlife Fund: http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/living_planet_report/)

One should keep in mind that the ICAIC and the Cuban state always encouraged, supported and sometimes commissioned young, experimental filmmakers, even though at times the results turned out to be too critical to be accepted, which is why often Landrián's films were neither authorized to be screened in theatres, nor sent to festivals outside the country – but nevertheless, they were produced. Landrián was free to choose his subjects and only *Coffea Arábica*, his most popular film,

was commissioned. All his films were shot on 35 millimeter and funded by the ICAIC – an extremely costly policy for a poor country like Cuba. Viewing Landrián’s films under Isabelle Stengers’s premise of an “ecology of practice” as a practice of subversion, one could say that they not only represent a practice that transforms and contradicts hierarchies, loyalties and orders, but also one that transports an understanding of vulnerability, that they position a “vulnerability to being captured by apparatuses [dispositifs]”²⁶ and its productivity.

²⁶ Isabelle Stengers, “The Care of the Possible: Isabelle Stengers interviewed by Erik Bordeleau” in *scapegoat service*, Issue 1, 2010, 13.