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Duple Cacao-Chocolate and the Materiality of the Political Economy of Pleasure

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Abstract

This article expands on Walter Rodney's call to explore possibilities for redevelopment of the African diaspora due to its underdevelopment. Drawing on four experiences of rural everyday resistance in Colombia, Brazil, and Venezuela, it analyses fine-flavour cocoa (*Theobroma cacao l.*) ecologies, subjectivities, and economics in relation to craft chocolate production, commercialisation, and consumption. Our evidence suggests that farmers' liberation projects occur beyond the ambivalence between oppression and emancipation. It is argued that emancipations are rather shaped by complex non-binary power dynamics with multiple tensions that resist the materiality of a racialised administration of pleasure and pain.

Keywords Cocoa · Chocolate · Pleasure · Pain · Resistance · Exploitation · Development

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Résumé
Cet article développe l'appel de Walter Rodney à explorer les possibilités de redéveloppement de la diaspora africaine en raison de son sous-développement. S'appuyant sur quatre expériences de résistance quotidienne rurale en Colombie, Brésil et Venezuela, il analyse les écologies, subjectivités et économies du cacao de fine saveur (Theobroma cacao l.) en relation avec la production, la commercialisation et la consommation de chocolat artisanal. Nos évidences suggèrent que les projets de libération des agriculteurs se produisent au-delà de l'ambivalence entre oppression et émancipation. Il est soutenu que les émancipations sont plutôt façonnées par des dynamiques de pouvoir non binaires complexes avec de multiples tensions qui résistent à la matérialité d'une administration racialisée du plaisir et de la douleur.

Introduction

Before the sixteenth century, cocoa was widely traded amongst Indigenous communities, spreading cocoa trees from South America to Mesoamerica (Dand 1999). Archaeological evidence indicates that since 2000 BC, Indigenous people in Mesoamerica utilised cocoa beans and *xocolatl* during ceremonies, rituals, marriages, and medicinal purposes (Graham and Skowronek 2016; Sampeck 2019). Cocoa beans were also widely used as currency, for exchange and payments, and for sealing political alliances. For instance, the ninth Emperor of the Mexico-Tenochtitlan Emperor, Monctezuma II, received annual tributes paid in cocoa—on one occasion, 24.000 cocoa beans were paid as equivalent to 2000 xiquipiles (Sorondo 1985: 12).

Whilst the existence of cocoa as money has been deeply entrenched in illicit and licit capital accumulation (Sampeck 2019: 538), it has been simultaneously involved in the uneven administration of pleasure, as we will subsequently argue in this article. Spanish colonisers described cocoa beverages as a 'divine drink' (Dand 1999: 3) and an 'exotic delicacy [to treat yourself]' (Loveman 2013: 38). The court official Johanna Theresia Harrach wrote in 1677 '[t]oday I had some Spanish chocolate and it tasted so good that I felt as though I were in heaven' (Bianca Lindorfer 2009). Research also reports that cocoa was employed in Europe initially amongst elites, and later became popular as a sexual stimulant (Dreiss and Greenhill 2008 cited by Poelmans and Swinnen 2016). Although cocoa was also known for its effect on energising workers during the Industrial Revolution (Squicciarini and Swinnen 2016), pleasure has mostly explained the emergence of cocoa colonial plantations to satisfy the new Europeans' bliss (Romero Cárdenas et al. 2016; Zarrillo et al. 2018; Strong Zúñiga 2020). Once again, '[p]leasure is neither natural nor innocent. Pleasure is learned and is thus intimately bound up with power and knowledge' (Kellner 1995: 39 cited by Durham 2003).

As the consumption of chocolate increased in European metropolitan centres, cocoa derivatives were diversified and new plantations spread across the Dutch East Indies and the Atlantic in Equatorial Africa, such as São Tomé and Príncipe, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroun, French Equatorial Africa, and Angola (Clarence-Smith 1990: 157). Large cocoa plantations were also consolidated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries across different locations in Ecuador, Venezuela, Trinidad,

Brazil, and Suriname (Arcila Farias 1973; Rios and Carvallo 1990). Due to experiencing violence, coercion, high mortality rates, and corporal punishments, plantation workers and indentured labourers engaged in different forms of resistance. Many ran away into mountains and forests (Acosta Saignes 1984; García 2001, Guerra Cedeno 1984; Aizpurua 2004; Aponte Torres 1985; Landers 1996; Ugueto-Ponce 2017, 2022), sabotaged equipment, engaged in drinking, committed suicide, or ate dirt (Clarence-Smith 1990; Higgs 2012).

Fugitive enslaved people or maroons 'established a pattern and practice of flight, fight and autonomous community-building' (Maria Beatriz Nascimento 2023: 158). Those were named as *quilombolas* (Brazil), *palenques* (Colombia), and *cumbes* or *conucos* (Venezuela) (Acevedo Marin et al. 2019). Likewise, they developed complex traditional cocoa agroforestry praxis (Chacón 1979). Later, workers also organised collective resistance in the form of revolts, hunger strikes, and work stoppages. Even in the twentieth century, cocoa workers continue to resist state and private plantations by smuggling (Brito-Figueroa 1983; Ladera de Diez 2008; Aizpurua 2004), spreading diseases, or destroying cocoa seedlings in nurseries (Amanor 2005).

Cocoa colonial plantations have been shaped by global models of agricultural development that were initially based on the exploitation of enslaved labour (Chambouleyron and Arenz 2021). In the late-twentieth century, this system responded to the demands of the Green Revolution by employing monoculture ecological designs, technology, agrochemicals and genetically modified species (Alger and Caldas 1994; Bahia de Aguiar and De Moura Pires 2019). According to Udemezue and Osegbue (2018: 135), some strategies may push to abandon Indigenous traditional agriculture to increase commodities' productivity.

At global scales, cacao production is also linked to the formation of the so-called *plantationocene*—an ongoing process of 'devastating transformation of diverse kinds of human-tended farms, pastures, and forests into extractive and enclosed plantations, relying on slave labour and other forms of exploited, alienated, and usually spatially transported labour' (Haraway 2015: 162). Murphy and Schroering (2020) argue that the *plantationocene* is rooted in a racial hierarchy that exercises anti-black racism. In this light, Macolm Ferdinand (2021) explains that following the abolition of slavery, the plantation system continues enslaving ecosystems via forced labour arrangements that reproduce colonial and patriarchal ecologies. More recently, agricultural policies and marketing of cacao, particularly in the fine-flavour cocoa and craft chocolate industry, have been shaped by sustainability discourses. However, questions remain such as whether justice for farmers is being served under fair-trade or the 'free slave chocolate' schemes (see Berlan 2008).

Cocoa plantations have also been involved in the formation of global geographies of consumption and commodification. Following the twentieth century, European and EU countries increasingly sustained the demand for cocoa beans from the cocoa belt—countries located twenty degrees down and up the equatorial line which are also read as part of the Global South. Cocoa beans are traded by distinguishing them between bulk and fine-flavour quality. The latter represents 12% of the worldwide cocoa production, according to the International Cocoa Organization (ICCO)—a sector on significant ongoing expansion in the

last 50 years (Castañeda-Ccori et al. 2020). By 2026, the cocoa and chocolate market in Latin America, the main producing continent of fine-flavour cocoa beans, is expected to increase by 7%, reaching a value of more than 20.1 billion US dollars (Statista 2023).

According to the ICCO, fine-flavour cocoa beans are perceived to have higher-quality flavour because of their denomination of origin, fermentation process and genetics (ICCO, hereafter; Obinze et al. 2022). The specialised beans are manufactured by craft chocolate makers and chocolatiers, usually in the Global North, who socially construct value by linking their bars with artisanal practices and specific geographies of cocoa production (Cidell and Alberts 2006). For instance, recent trends in craft chocolate marketing exhibit personal information about farmers, such as name, ethnicity, or gender, alongside cultural and geographical descriptions (French 2017; Robertson 2017). Similarly, Italian Slow Food schemes demonstrate that in globalised economics, per se, 'no mechanism is in place to ensure that the value extracted remains with producers' (Fonte and Cucco 2015: 282). For instance, cocoa farmers' livelihoods seem not to improve, as they still cannot capture the extra revenues (see Villacisa et al. 2020). Indeed, as shown by Lina Lucumi-Mosquera (forthcoming) drawing on Lélia Gonzalez (1979 [2020]; 1984)' and Patricia Hill-Collins (1990 [2002]), some craft chocolate wrappers serves to ideologically justify oppression against Black Latinas. More importantly, as we subsequently argue, the construction of pleasure and its administration alongside pain seems to be not only racialised but reinforced by gender and class hierarchies.

Scholars have interrogated the political economy of pleasure in global production networks such as wine (Yelvington et al. 2014), tourism (Goldschmitt 2017; Padilla et al. 2018; Shiner 2010), sugar (Mintz 1986), or advertisement (Durham 2003). Nevertheless, few studies have explored the everyday racialised and gendered development experiences (Rivas 2018) of fine-flavour cocoa farmers in Latin America in relation to the administration of pleasure and pain. This article explores how the relationship between fine-flavour cocoa production, craft chocolate manufacture, and its consumption has created a political economy and geographies of pleasure that are racialised by differentiating which bodies and geographies are constructed to be pleased and/or a pleaser, although contestations subvert binarism.

We do not suggest that power is exclusively exercised against farmers in the Global South by actors in the Global North. Indeed, Robertson (2017: 3), who also agrees with the construction of chocolate as'luxurious, hedonistic, and sensual', demonstrates that social oppression is rather rooted in structural systems of domination (Collins 1990)—Robertson (2017) reveals the gender discrimination and poor working conditions linked to imperial exploitation against low-income female workers in York (UK). Therefore, we delve into the political economy of pleasure to illustrate the power relationships behind cocoa production and chocolate consumption and how those are shaped by systems of oppression, domination and discrimination based on race, ethnicity, and gender (see Yelvington et al. 2014). In other words, we examine how cocoa production, commercialisation, and consumption connect and racialise labour regimes, bodies, food systems, imaginations, landscapes, and traders (Haraway 2015; Murphy and Schroering 2020; Wolford 2021).

Drawing on Rodney (1979, 1981, 2018) in conversation with Brazilian scholar Lélia Gonzalez (1988, 2020; Rios and Lima 2020; Rios 2020; Viveros-Vigoya 2020, 2021), the following section explores the intersection of development, racialised geographies, ecologies and social memories. We subsequently explain our methodologies and analyse four experiences of fine-flavour cocoa farmers' resistance in Colombia, Brazil and Venezuela. We discuss how farmers' liberation projects and practices occur beyond the ambivalence between oppression and emancipation. It is argued that emancipations are rather shaped by complex non-binary power dynamics with multiple tensions. Finally, it is concluded that material contestations resist the racialised administration of pleasure and pain in the production and consumption of cocoa commodities.

Development, Racism, Landscapes, and Memories in Fine-Flavour Cocoa Production

Racialisation has been a constituent feature of the development of cocoa imperial trajectories by establishing racial (and gendered) hierarchies amongst farmers, workers, merchants, development actors, scientists, and consumers (Mollett 2021). Modern cocoa plantations are recognised as ideal (McKittrick 2013), opposite to the traditional agroforestry systems often associated with backwardness, unproductivity or wildness. For instance, Eddens (2019), examining Mexican maize arrangements, argues that research and development agendas equated whiteness with scientific superiority and Indigenous agroforestry with underdevelopment. This phenomenon is also recognised by Ferdinand (2021) as 'colonial inhabitation'—namely, the subordination of colonised territories achieved through the expansion of few cash crops while eroding traditional farming to create the constant threat of chronic starvation and malnutrition in Africa. Whilst the plantation promotes monocropping and the exploitation of racialised labour, Indigenous and Black communities generate complex agroforestry systems and landscapes.

The establishment of colonial plantations in Spanish and Portuguese colonies depended primarily on the labour of millions of enslaved Africans. After abolition, millions of cocoa trees were brought to the islands of Príncipe (1830), São Tomé and Fernando Po or Bioko (1854), Nigeria (1874), and Ghana (1879). This was the largest transcontinental transfer in the history of tropical agriculture known as the first West African cocoa boom (Ross 2014). Today different forms of family labour, migrant informal force, child exploitation, and precarious wages illustrate the diversity of rearrangements that updated the colonial forms of cocoa production (Gayi and Tsowou 2016; Thorsen and Maconachie 2023).

Lélia Gonzalez (2020) allows us to expand on Rodney's arguments on the connections between race, under/development, and monocropping. Gonzalez (1988) reintroduces the spatial-historical concept of Améfrica Ladina to map a collective geographical-based identity that highlights Indigenous' and Africans' contributions, adaptations, resistances, reinterpretations and creations in the so-called 'New Word'. Likewise, the notion of Améfrica underlines the intertwining of race, gender and class discrimination by recentering (un)human experiences. In the context of cocoa

production and chocolate consumption, she might invite us to explore not only the global and regional flow of cocoa beans and chocolate confectioneries but also the silenced everyday social relations, memories and racialised experiences of farmers, chocolate makers, chocolatiers, communities, and cooperatives. Rodney and Gonzalez meet (although at different scales) in their interests to scrutinise the racial division of labour regimes alongside its contestations.

Rodney's imagination of redevelopment involves fostering cultural pluralism from a Black-centred perspective to denounce European cultural imperialism, racism, and deceiving objectivism. Redevelopment in his view aims to 'cut the tentacles which imperialism has extended into their countries' (Rodney 2018: 39). Yet, Gonzalez (1988) draws specific attention to the subjective experience of memory and development and to the process of denying Black oppressions in Améfrica. She revisits the concepts of consciousness and memory to address those economic arrangements, like in cocoa, where despite explicit narratives of fairness, development, and sustainability, inequalities are denied and yet still persistent against farmers who are racialised as Black or People of Colour.

Gonzalez et al. (2021: 374) describes memory as 'the realm of the unknown, the covering, alienation, oblivion, and even knowledge'; while consciousness, in contrast, manifests as the place of dominant discourse. In the case of cocoa plantations, consciousness is linked to the reproduction of discourses on development, social mobility, productivity, and value. The latter elements can be read in the continuity of the cocoa plantation. Consciousness, as stated by Lélia Gonzalez, conceals and is imposed upon memory, which is the 'unknowing that knows, this place of inscriptions that restores an unwritten story, the place where truth emerges, a truth that is structured as fiction' (Gonzalez et al. 2021: 374). Then, the fiction of pleasure and the denial of pain in cocoa dynamics are precisely what this article examines. Therefore, we will explore how memories about forests, cultural imaginations, cocoa commercialisation, and chocolate manufacture speak 'through the nonsense of consciousness speech' (Gonzalez et al. 2021: 374) while contesting the racialised administration of pleasure and pain.

We examine the memories, subjectivities, ecologies, and economies of cocoa to name the denied neocolonial implications of how Europe underdeveloped Améfrica Ladina via the systematic exploitation of Black and Indigenous bodies, landscapes, and agroforestry practices. Simultaneously, as resistance has taken place in contemporary plantations, we enquire how anti-colonial practices have coexisted under such norms. Focusing on experiences from Colombia, Brazil, and Venezuela, we aim to deepen our understanding of exploitation and resistance within cocoa Amefrican geographies. Our evidence suggests a deceiving ambivalence between oppression and emancipation that is rather shaped by complex non-binary dynamics of power with multiple contestations and negotiations.

As Gonzalez offers an analytical possibility to expand on Rodney's call for redevelopment, this paper outlines cocoa communities' imaginations for justice. Nevertheless, scanning such everyday contestation demands critical reflections and vocabularies as they transcend the dual rationale of domination against resistance. Thus, we aim to map and address radical, co-opting, and even deceiving (individual and collective) initiatives. The main contribution of this paper resides in 'naming' (bell

hooks 2000) the racialised legacies and disputes involved in the production of the duple cocoa and chocolate, whose beans hegemonically served colonialism and its economies of pleasure.

Methodology

This article draws on qualitative research, employing semi-structured interviews, ethnography, focus group discussions, participant observation, and secondary data analysis. Data about each setting has been collected under different procedures, timelines and locations (see Map 1). The Colombian data were gathered interruptedly between 2014 and 2021 via participatory observation in cocoa agroforestry settings and semi-structured interviews with nine cocoa farming families in Alto Cauca. The Venezuelan study consists of 90 semi-structured interviews and focus groups conducted between 2013 and 2016 in Miranda state.[1] Furthermore, five semi-structured interviews were undertaken in Aragua state from 2020 to 2023 for the project 'Sabores de la Memoria Afro' (see Ugueto-Ponce and Felicien 2022). The Brazilian case examines secondary data and participatory observations of the VII y VIII editions of the 'Chocolat Festival: Feria Internacional del Chocolate e Cacau' (Belém do Pará) in November 2022 and August 2023, respectively.

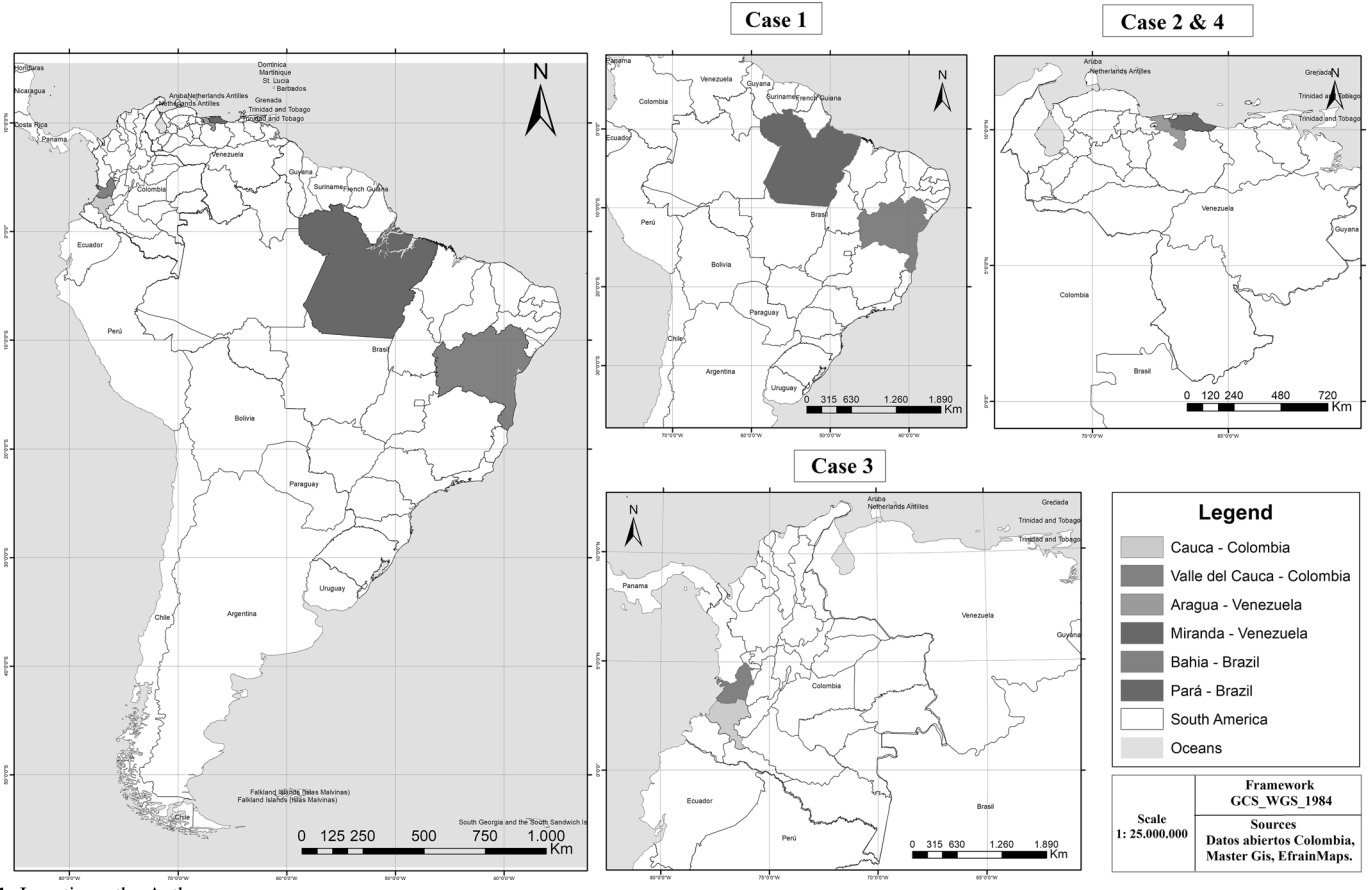
The following four themes do not represent all cocoa farming in Améfrica. Neither do they together mirror a cocoa production network. They cannot be generalised. Instead, the value of these experiences resides in their potential to illustrate the everyday deceiving ambivalence between oppression and emancipation as well as experiences of pleasure and pain that are rather shaped by complex non-binary dynamics of power with multiple contestations. We found commonalities that are presented in four themes—namely, forests, cultural imaginations, commodities, and manufacture.

Theme 1: Forests

> "We know how to harvest, we also have taperebá, murumuru, andiroba… Baião's cocoa production is large", a cocoa producer from the quilombo Engenho-Marariá in Baião, Pará, Brazil.

The Brazilian Amazonian foraging farming (hunter–gatherer) challenges long-term commodification while pursuing food sovereignty and forest conservation. Cocoa is one of the native species of the Amazonian flood plain, the Várzea (see Map 1), that has been collected by Indigenous and Black communities. In the sixteenth century, missionaries began to trade cocoa beans in the zone, exploiting the labour force and knowledge of Indigenous and African enslaved people (Squicciarini and Swinnen

[1] Data were initially collected as part of the project 'Organisational, socio-cultural, and traditional knowledge affecting cocoa beans in Barlovento', sponsored by the Venezuelan Ministerio Popular para la Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación.



Map 1 Locations, the Authors

2016). In 1746, the Portuguese brought Amazonian cacao to establish the first cocoa plantations in the south of Bahia state, a region known today as the Mata Atlântica—a highly diverse tropical rainforest where *cabruca*, a traditional agroforestry system, was developed by Indigenous and Black communities (Sambuichi 2002; Bahia de Aguiar and De Moura Pires 2019). Colonial plantations covered the Amazonian and Mata Atlântica biomes.

Currently, Brazil is the 7th largest cocoa producer worldwide, and the Amazonian state of Pará and the Northeastern state of Bahia are the main two producers, reflecting the legacy of the colonial plantation project. Nevertheless, Black and Indigenous communities have handed down through generation's complex agroforestry systems in favour of conservation and sustainability (Sambuichi 2002). Namely, they collect cocoa beans in these regions, where cocoa trees are endemic, under highly diversified plots embedded in a tropical forest landscape while combining agricultural practices with collection routines. The latter consists of gathering fruits from the Amazon with the minimum possible human intervention—this crop is often referred to by communities as *extractive cocoa* (Brondízio and Andrea 1997; Somarriba and Lachenaud 2013). 'Extractive' does not refer to Latin American activists' critique of *extractivism*—'those activities which remove large quantities of natural resources that are not processed (or only to a limited degree), especially for export' (Acosta 2013: 62). Instead, local communities use the term as an acknowledgement of their 'disturbance of the local forest ecosystem' by harvesting from 'wild' cocoa trees (Somarriba and Lachenaud 2013: 51).

Despite developing sophisticated agroecological arrangements, cocoa farmers have been historically considered 'unskilled labour' under past and present colonial regimes (Rodney 1972). Moreover, they are often blamed by policymakers and landowners for preventing development as they reject the plantation monoculture system. However, *extractive cocoa* serves to preserve rich biodiversity and endemic endangered species. Suelly Cardoso, from the Association of Quilombola Residents of Moju-Miri AQMOMI, and participant in the VIII International Cocoa Festival held in 2023, said that

> "Ever since I grew up, my father had it, but the price was very cheap, now we have been taking care of this native cacao that is not fertilised [...] we always take care of the native cacao, we keep the cacao and the açaí because when one is missing, we have another one".

Nowadays, the 'rediscovery' of native Amazonian cocoa beans is in high demand by chocolate makers in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Europe. These markets demand green-ancestral-original beans as they have proven to have complex organoleptic profiles. This narrative was recurrent amongst the 100 exhibitors of bean-to-bar chocolate at the International Cocoa Festival. Amazonian cocoa challenges monoculture hegemony and the Green Revolution, which attempts to favour productivity maximisation to satisfy European desire towards chocolate as shown by Rodney (2018).

Gathering native Amazonian cocoa by *quilombola* communities is a traditional praxis aiming at preserving autonomous food production and the diversity of species. Wild cocoa coexists with several other species, such as açai (*Euterpe oleracea*)

and cupuassu (*Theobroma grandiflorum*). This system is rooted in repertoires of freedom that integrate forest conservation concerns to revindicate local well-being and happiness. Families express great pride and joy when remembering how their parents and grandparents have protected the native cocoa and the forest. Simultaneously, the várzea forest imposes what can be understood as an 'agricultural frontier' for conventional cocoa farming systems, as the latter are often dependent on genetic modifications, fertilisers, and pesticides.

De La Torre (2018) calls 'environmental creolisation' the individual and collective process that allowed enslaved people to acquire environmental knowledge about neotropical forests through three different processes, namely the importation of skills and strategies from African equatorial territories, the acquisition and innovation of agricultural knowledge in plantations, and inter-ethnic exchanges with Indigenous farmers. We expand De La Torre (2018)'s environmental creolisation by arguing that, although intrinsically violent, this process is performed with pride, care, and pleasure as it is also explicit in the case of cacharreras (Colombia) and Aura Rosa (Venezuela), mentioned below. Voeks (2013) also contends that the introduction, assimilation, and substitution of species are the main features of a 'diasporic ethnobotany' which involves complex dynamics of adaptation and resilience by the enslaved people who brought their tropical agricultural experience with them (see Gonçalves and Hanazaki 2023). Moreover, resistance to forest commodification goes beyond anthropocentric dynamics (human interactions), which cannot be examined here. Whilst the centre of this discussion is Black farmers' possibilities of redevelopment, it must be stressed that more research is needed to delve into nature-based interactions.

Despite the high demand for Brazilian native Amazonian cocoa, farmers still face challenging livelihood conditions. A representative of the Executive Commission of the Cocoa Farming Plan (CEPLAC) at the International Chocolate and Cocoa Festival (2022) stated that the main obstacles to cocoa production are the lack of technical assistance, insufficient credit, precarious transport infrastructure, and constant threats by diseases and pests. However, it seems that policymakers continue to focus on increasing productivity by augmenting yield. Nevertheless, it is discursively ignored how farmers can capture the revenues that are produced from their conservation of 'ancestral' native cocoa trees.

Quilombola's agroecological resistance has been co-opted by emerging markets, such as the *bean-to-bar* and *tree-to-bar*. Those initiatives often marketise territories, ancestrality, indigeneity, and long-term resistance without equally sharing profits with Indigenous people. As stated by Ray (1998), global economies commodify 'culture' and 'nature' which can be leaking, capturing, enhancing, and destroying intangible assets by those who usufruct (or control) the labour and knowledge of their original creators (Rodney 2018).

Theme 2: Cultural Imaginations

> "[…] there used to be the people who had the capability [facultad] and who helped spiritually. They were clever [habilidosos]. For cleaning trees [jalar],

> he used muñecos [dolls]. Normally he would clean 400 to 500 cacao trees per day, but with muñecos, he could clean 1000 in a little while. This is to work with ritual skills [maña]", Male cocoa farmer, Barlovento, 2015.

The second theme explores cultural imaginations and memories of resistance amongst some Black cocoa workers in the Venezuelan Miranda state (see Map 1), a region known for the presence of colonial cocoa plantations co-existing with *conucos* (subsistence plots) and *cumbes* (marroon settlements). These states comprise diversified middle-size haciendas, land reform plots, tourist enterprises and fishing cooperatives. Black cocoa workers remember people who used ritual dolls [muñecos] for collecting cocoa beans and cleaning trees. These imaginations and narratives evoke 'that which cannot be said' about exploitation and labour regimes within plantations but can be reconstructed as historical truth (Gonzalez et al. 2021).

Spiritual rituals seem to be persistent amongst memories of resistance within plantations in Améfrica. Cultural imaginations of African descendants in the Americas expressed their determinant desire to contest bodily subjection, alienation, and dehumanisation imposed by plantation regimes (Du Bois 2008; McMillan 1994). Black sugar cutters in Southwestern Colombia used religious practices and magic to 'redeem the mode of production of use-values and to wrest it from the alienation of means from ends under capitalism' (Michael Taussig 1977: 98).

In Barlovento, some people had access to magical books to invoke the doll spirits, via spells and prayers. There is a certain degree of secrecy as the identity of the people who conjure dolls is never revealed (Taussig 1977), different from Cuban's, as documented by Diana Espiritu Santo (2019). Whilst the Cuban dolls of the procession of the Virgen Negra en Regla in La Habana are engaged in public performances (Viarnes 2010), the muñecos of Barlovento are not displayed or seen in houses or public places. The magic dolls tend to be invoked by men at night and they move across the haciendas, regulating the management of resources and labour in smaller scales. Afro-Venezuelan practices of magic in Barlovento are deeply interwoven with fluid forms of Folk Catholicism and Afro-Catholicism (Sojo 1986; García 2001; Pollack-Eltz 1978; Ugueto-Ponce 2017).

The use of magical dolls is not reduced to its economic utility. As suggested by Diana Espiritu Santo (2019: 274), dolls are not just material objects, but entities with affective, social, lived, and personality traits. They sustain an 'external ecology of the self' and express a 'system of affectively invested selfhood' (Espiritu Santo 2019: 271). These memories reveal ambiguous positions which speak to individual affective assemblages as well as collective relational dynamics amongst objects (dolls), human collectives (workers), nonhuman sentient beings (cocoa trees), and ritual knowledge. For example, a Black cocoa farmer, an expert in drum crafting, remembered that

> "There was a man in this town who had night dolls [que tenía muñecos de noche]. During incantations and prayers, small black dolls began to appear. The dolls immediately went towards the person who conjured them asking him to give orders. These little men, of black colour, could clean a hacienda in very little time, but in exchange, they asked for food. The food was given to them in big baskets, which in no time usually disappeared. But the downfall

> of who conjured the muñecos was maintaining them. As they worked, they also demanded food, but if the food was not given to them, they turned against their master. Not everybody could do this, because it involved serious pacts", Barlovento, 2016.

Narratives about magical dolls working in cocoa haciendas sustain the desire to name, resist, denounce and transform the logic of anti-black exploitation and the position of the so-called 'masters', known as 'the big cocoas' [los grandes cacaos]. These memories unsettle binaries between oppression and resistance, as alternative paths for controlling knowledge and labour are re-imagined. These rituals imagine and delineate routes of escape from the labour alienation experienced by rural workers who were paid by the number of trees cleaned in a day. As stated by Taussig (1977), these imaginations are not only about increasing the yield of cocoa and ensuring access to higher wages, but they are also contesting suffering and (dis) pleasure inflicted by ruling classes.

Following Gonzalez (2020), these imaginations could represent a defence from the denial pain experienced by cocoa daily wage workers. Slave spirits 'lay claim to and re-enact the historical violence out of which they emerged' (Belision De Jesus 2013: 510 in Espiritu Santo 2019: 272). The dolls here do not represent 'transcendental presences' nor are they mediators of the oppression, but as suggested by Espiritu Santo (2019: 274), they may constitute 'an extended self in-process'. In the context of Barlovento, the dolls may represent an extension of an individual self (the *brujo*), and the workers as an oppressed collective body, with the potential of subverting plantation labour regimes. However, while the labour exploitation of Black bodies is resisted via the use of dolls, this resistance ironically ends up increasing masters' productivity.

Plantation administrators were aware of these imaginations and practices and were suspicious of anyone who would produce more in less time (Taussig 1977). Despite the rise in productivity, we were told that plantation foremen (capataces) often would use their own maña to make the machetes of the workers bounce from the trees and thus delay the work of the muñecos. Although the pain, exhaustion, and subjection were transferred to extend the dolls, masters' responses reveal that increasing yield was as desirable as displeasure and sorrow. Even if productivity needs to be sacrificed for the sake of pain.

Theme 3: Commodities

> "When I cannot go to La Finca, I feel restless. I cannot wait for the next day to go. It has been my routine. If they also take La Finca away from us, we will die", 84-year former cacharrera, Valle del Cauca.

The third theme explores alternative commercialisation channels proposed by Black female cocoa farmers as was the case of Black female cocoa farmers in Northern Cauca and Southern Valle del Cauca departments in Colombia (see Map 1). They called themselves *cacharreras*—farmers who refuse to sell locally to intermediaries. They grow food under a traditional agroforestry system called *La Finca*, an

ecological arrangement like the Brazilian *cabruca* or the Venezuelan *conuco*. It is believed that these farming designs are a legacy handed down by maroons who fled from colonial plantations and settled in a region known today as Alto Cauca (Colombian Pacific lowlands). According to interviews, late in the nineteenth century, maroons organised small free towns near the Cauca River for subsistence. They also decided to remain near plantations for marronage purposes (Nascimento 2023). The first encounter of these communities with cocoa occurred in the Americas and under enslaved conditions. This version has been recorded by Mateo Mina (2011) for the case of Colombia, and many others like Timothy Walker (2007) for Brazil. After the abolishment of slavery, cocoa became a crucial cash crop of *La Finca*.

Cacharrera's everyday development practices include generating income to prevent their male family members from joining colonial sugar plantations as cutters. The later occupation threatens workers' well-being as they are allegedly exposed to toxic pesticides, fatigue and high temperatures, often under informal contracts (Hougaard 2022). Cacharreras ensured that *La Finca* would never let people starve to death ["no morirémos de hambre"]. Farms combine orange, lemon, lime, mandarin, potatoes, cassava, plantains, avocado, corn, banana, coffee, gooseberry, and cocoa, among others.

Cacharreras' memories contribute to the discussion on whether, by the mid-1900s, Black women had a protagonist's role in cocoa farming, or they only performed males' supporting activities (Robertson 2017)—e.g., they collect beans, split the pods with a machete to extract the beans, and then dry them using sun heat. Like those women interviewed by Barrow (1991) in the Caribbean, the cacharreras were also committed to income generation. They had leadership in selling cocoa beans. These Black female farmers challenged the colonial division of labour and gender norms as they were [and still are] active in the commercialisation of different crops within local and regional marketplaces.

Although acknowledging the difficulties of agricultural labour, they repeatedly state their excitement about growing cocoa. All interviewed *cacharreras* expressed their pleasure of working in *La Finca* and taking care of their cocoa plants. After harvesting the beans, some female farmers collected the harvest from other farmers and organised them in 70-kg bags. Memories recall that a chiva bus picked them up at midnight in the village. The cacharreras loaded and guarded the bags to later sell the beans in the main food market of Cali city. The vehicle stopped at different small villages.

Testimonies also highlight the importance of solidarity amongst women by looking after each other. Not all women from these towns will leave the rural former Palenque to commercialise cocoa beans. Those who would not travel would take care of the children as their mothers would return the next day in the afternoon. Some *cacharreras* took with them one or two children so they could also have a taste of the city while learning how to deal with wholesale buyers. A 59-year-old male, who was once taken by *cacharreras* to the city, described those times as "unforgettable" and "delightful", despite precarious conditions. He also remembered the strength of those women to bargain in the market with mestizo men—"they were very confident, brave and astute, they were peasant Black women facing a bunch of

richer men in the city". With the collected money, women will buy items that were not produced in their communities, such as fabrics, soap, oil, and kerosene.

Intermediaries also used to visit villages trying to buy cocoa beans. Nevertheless, community members refused to sell to them. Instead, they would sell their beans to the *cacharreras* because "they knew better" and "they cared about us" as they fought for higher prices in the city market. Indeed, they did. Research confirms that intermediaries capture a high portion of cocoa trade value, often explaining cocoa farmer's low revenues despite participating in a market in expansion (Díaz-Montenegro et al. 2018; Escobar et al. 2020; Mithöfer et al. 2017). Nevertheless, *cacharreras* reported that although they managed to enjoy farming in *La Finca*, please some children and obtain a higher price by trading directly, they witnessed their cocoa beans being negotiated at significantly higher prices in the same market. They also expressed their frustration for not being able to reach those buyers who came to the market to trade exclusively with wholesalers—here is the tension, like Rosa Aura's experience, stated below.

Theme 4: Manufacture

> "My chocolate is natural, different from those sold in kiosks with many other artificial ingredients. Mine only has cocoa and sugar. They [children] buy both chocolates, though. But they say mine is tastier. Instead, the other one, you smelled it and nothing! It is just fat. It came from factories and people brought it here and sold it, but they do not make much money. I know they add vegetable oil instead of cocoa butter. It has a lot of added ingredients. Different from mine. Manufacturers only care about flavour", Rosa Aura, Cuyagua.

As cacharreras proposed an alternative commercialisation channel, Rosa Aura (pseudonym) created an unusual manufacturing trajectory. She is an Afro-Venezuelan woman who grows fine-flavour cocoa and produces craft chocolate in Cuyagua, a small village in Aragua State (see Map 1). The farmer–chocolatier consciously challenges the commercial, corporal and intellectual exploitation of the local food systems. Her resistance resides in educating local children's palate, so they enjoy high-quality craft chocolate. Locals have generationally been in contact with cocoa beans as a plantation device but rarely as a source of pleasure, as it has been for their European counterparts since the nineteenth century.

The relationship that some Black female farmers have with cocoa trees is affective (Maura Falconi 2017; Garduño et al., 2022). These emotions often respond to lived experiences of knowledge transmission over generations—i.e. participants mentioned that they learned about weed control, irrigation, pruning, fertilising, and cutting almonds from their mothers, aunts, and grandmothers as they did from their predecessors. Therefore, cocoa farming is attached to memories of not only care, tenderness, and ethnic self-identification but also generational resistance against displacement.

Rosa Aura exemplifies the role Afro-Venezuelan women have played in cocoa production (Maura Falconi 2017), proving once again that racialised female cocoa farmers do more than supportive activities, as also shown by cacharreras.

Furthermore, this 56-year-old female farmer works for a farming cooperative in Cuyagua which collectively commercialises cocoa beans with European intermediaries. Rosa Aura's resistance is threefold. First, she harvests fine-flavour cocoa beans under the diversified agroforestry called *conuco*—like cacharreras' finca and Amazonian *cabruca*. Second, she refuses to participate partially in chocolate global production networks' dynamics, which results in high price fluctuation and value leaks. Thirdly, she manufactures high-quality craft chocolate bars and chocolate bonbons using tropical fruits. She sets apart a portion of her cocoa production for local consumption despite its chocolate being ranked as one of the best beans worldwide (Porcelana Venezolana). Her clients are mainly children.

Rosa Aura recognises that children's taste has been corrupted by high sugar concentrated confectioneries. She aims to educate children so they can enjoy the sensory attributes of local cocoa beans by offering single-origin dark chocolate bars. Children pay less than £1 for items that can cost between £7 and £10 in international markets. Of course, her cost structure is significantly lower, considering that ingredients and manufacturing costs are similarly inferior. Nonetheless, Rosa Aura challenges the consciousness and memories (Gonzalez 1988) of the ongoing colonial distribution of pleasure and pain established since colonial times by confronting the racialised development trajectory that controls labour, subsistence, and pleasure.

Rosa Aura reported that her revenues have several dimensions. She highlights her ability to have control over the transformation process and sourcing of cocoa beans and panela [brown sugar], in a market that is known for its international pressures that do not always benefit actors at the networks' roots (see Tiffen 2002). Furthermore, Rosa Aura, similarly to Cacharreras, expressed her enjoyment, pleasure and love to work in the *conuco,* the cooperative and their interactions with children, without omitting the physical fatigue associated with performing all the listed activities (see Winters 2020). Regarding the latter, she strengthens her collaboration with other farmers as she only uses local ingredients including tropical fruits, such as coconut, ginger, guava, and passion fruit.

Rosa Aura refuses to sell her chocolates in tourist settings, another economic activity in this coastal region of Cuyagua. She argues that tourist dynamics can make their products inaccessible to local people (and especially children) as prices can get higher. This scenario will block local children from participating in the enjoyment of a commodity that served as a motive to enslave their ancestors. Moreover, she recognises that higher prices for final consumers do not necessarily translate into higher revenue for her. Nevertheless, the chocolate-making enterprise does not pay Rosa Aura's bills and she still must sell an important amount of her personal and collective production to European and the US markets.

Discussion and Conclusion

The previous cases display four attempts towards redevelopment which, amongst others, challenge the materiality of the political economy of pleasure and pain. European and lately the USA desire for cocoa beans has set a production arrangement that administrates pain and pleasure by extracting resources, culture, knowledge, and

labour force from Amefrican landscapes and people. If sugar exemplified the history of happiness and sorrow (Mintz 1986), so does cocoa for pleasure and pain. In other words, cocoa farmers in Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela's resistance must be read through its past of enslavement, racialised violence, control of bodies, and memories of suffering. Furthermore, everyday development resistance is extended to the forests via traditional agroforestry systems such as *extractive cocoa*, *cabruca*, *La Finca*, and *conuco*. Those not only pursue environmental conservation challenged by monoculture expansion but also become a ground to dispute affection, care, joy, and spirituality. Moreover, although farmer resistance does not manage to completely control the production network, they root their everyday struggle in the reaffirmation of their ethnicity and race identities. They contested the dichotomies of pleasure vs labour or sugar candy vs food.

It nevertheless occurs amidst multiple tensions. For instance, despite the local preservation of 100-year cocoa trees in the Brazilian Amazon, farmers are not able to capture higher value. The contribution of farmers goes beyond providing dried beans, as they also protect the várzea forest ecology with its flooding conditions. Like Colombian cacharreras or Rosa Aura, they are still powerless actors within the network, and so they were unable to receive a fair price.

Rosa Aura's efforts of educating children palladate coexists with feeding global networks, like farmers' dolls in Barlovento whose easing pain translates into higher productivity for those who exercise racialised violence against them. At different levels and degrees, they managed to sabotage the hegemonic administration of pleasure and pain, but it still must be addressed whether cocoa farmers can 'cut the tentacles which imperialism has extended into their countries' (Rodney 2018: 39)—considering that fine-flavour cocoa farmers only capture a one-digit percentage of final prices nowadays. Colonial and neocolonial systems readjust to maintain the imbalance in the disfavour of cocoa farmers. As Rodney relates in the case of Africa, companies that purchased raw materials never absorbed the losses—e.g. the western coasts of Africa witnessed the versatility of these companies, as they also became manufacturers (Rodney 2018: 189–190).

Closing Considerations

Our main argument is that Améfrica's response to its underdevelopment in fine-flavour cocoa and craft chocolate production seems to occur beyond the ambivalence between oppression and emancipation. Rather, it appears to be shaped by complex non-binary power dynamics with multiple tensions. A conversation between Rodney and Lélia Gonzalez on the African diaspora's resistance through cocoa farming and trade may serve to deepen the materiality of domination and abolitionist projects. Our argument was developed fourfold. First, the nineteenth-century arrangements that supplied Europe and North America with cocoa and chocolate mirror today's global production networks and an administration of pleasure and pain that is persistent in colonial and neocolonial regimes. Secondly, these colonial legacies are intertwined in domination based on race, class, and gender, whose manifestations are deeply contextual. Thirdly, resistance by Amefrican farmers coexists

within this oppression whose manifestation seems to mutate as communities contest. Fourthly, examining the latter domination serves to expand our understanding of farming women's agency, human, and nonhuman experiences in agroforestry and plantations, as well as the political economy of pleasure. Our ultimate contribution resides in unfolding the complexity of Black people's projects against 'underdevelopment'. Rosa Aura, cacharreras, doll owners, and Amazonian cocoa collectors offer important lessons on how pleasure and pain are grounds under dispute with material implications in the distribution of wealth and production means.

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Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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