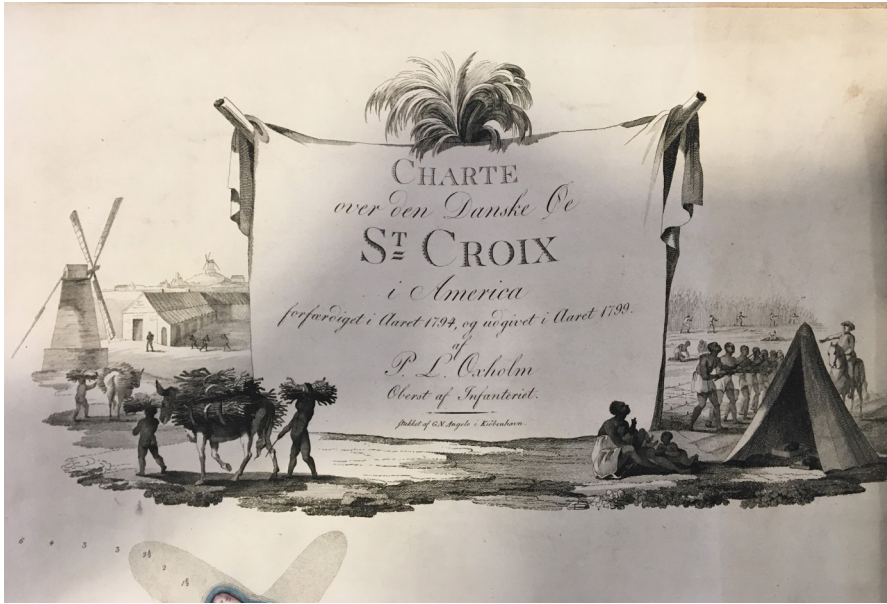


‘CUTTING THE CONTACT ZONE: RACE, TEMPORALITY AND  
HISTORY IN PETER LOTHARIUS OXHOLM’S MAP OF ST.  
CROIX (1799)’

*Helene Engnes Birkeli*

In 1778, a 25-year-old lieutenant named Peter Lotharius Oxholm arrived on the Caribbean island of St. Croix. He was tasked with surveying the Danish-Norwegian West Indies, as well as proposing the improvement of their fortifications.<sup>1</sup> The survey of the three islands proved so difficult and laborious, however, that Oxholm nearly gave up, noting that ‘[t]hese islands are nothing but mountains and cliffs, where it is almost impossible to survey or prepare a geographic large scale map before one has first *cut lines and ways through the bush to get on*’.<sup>2</sup> ‘One’ here notably refers mostly to enslaved workers that accompanied Oxholm, six of whom were required for the survey of St Croix. Suggested is also the centrality of enslaved knowledge in the mapmaking process, as he further informs us that the enslaved used the ‘necessary instruments’ [triangulation] to complete the task.<sup>3</sup> Following the completion of the survey, Oxholm eventually drew a large-scale map of St Croix which was engraved and printed in 1799. This essay focuses on the accompanying figurative cartouche that identifies the map (figure 1). I argue that the cartouche is a material manifestation of the ideology of slavery as an opposition between black and white. Reading the cartouche and Oxholm’s writing on sugar production against the grain, I also propose that it reveals an anxiety about the economic and social instability of slave society.

The cartouche comprises a sign displaying the title ‘St Croix’, represented as a sheet hung over two hollowed poles jutting out from each side, suggesting a cross. The sign is positioned in a landscape firmly marked as a West Indian plantation society, both an imaginary and a ‘real’ site of labour. In front of the sign, on either side, are black figures. On the right is a seated woman holding two children. The woman’s head is in profile and all look up in the same direction. To the right of this group is a small tent-like structure, within which are two low containers or mattresses, conceivably containing infants.



**Figure 1** Cartouche of Peter Lotharius Oxholm, *CHARTER over den Danske Øe ST CROIX i America /forfærdiget i Aaret 1794, og udgivet i Aaret 1799. af P.L. Oxholm Oberst af Infanteriet* [Map of the Danish Island ST CROIX in America/ made in 1794 and published in 1799]. Copper engraving by G.N. Angelo, 174 x 65 cm. © Courtesy of the British Library Board (Maps K.Top.123.73.2 TAB)

To the left of the group are young boys carrying sugarcane and driving mules, one using a small whipping stick. He looks up whilst holding the stick in a tense but lowered position. On the other side, behind the tent, is a group of men working in the fields, all simultaneously raising their hatchets to till the earth. Directing them from his horse and with his raised arm is a white overseer.

‘Cutting’ as a repeated performative act, both literal and transferred, enabled this map to come into being and permeated its resulting visual politics. During its process of making, the engraver’s burin cut the copper plate that allowed the map’s reproduction. On the surface of the image, these ‘cuts’ re-emerge as the violence of the plantation system and imperial landscaping that unwittingly let slip the potential for the enslaved to resist their conditions. I draw on Mary Louise Pratt’s notion of ‘contact zones’ to describe the ways in which ‘cuts’ in the printing process, sugar production

and in the circular depiction of time, expose the boundaries between bodies and spaces constituted by slavery and colonialism.<sup>4</sup> Whereas Pratt uses contact zones to describe a linguistic and cultural space produced by colonial encounters, my concerns lie with the ways in which difference was materialised in cartographic space. Before introducing an against-the-grain reading, however, I will address the more intentional ideological work it may have performed for contemporary viewers. Firstly, a discussion of its production is pertinent.

The map was published as a single piece, printed on two sheets (figure 2). Oxholm most likely finished the drawing of the map around 1792 or 1793, based on the account of educational reformer and writer on the colonies, Hans West. West describes a 'very precise and large scale situation chart by Statshauptmann Oxholm almost finished before my departure'.<sup>5</sup> Based on a 1794 manuscript map, the engraving on copper plates was made by *Videnskabernes Selskab* [The Society of Sciences] in Copenhagen between 1797 and 1799, which Oxholm sought to publish personally.<sup>6</sup> Gottfried N. Angelo (1767–1816) was the society's engraver, and seemed to have spent most of his time and limited workshop resources engraving Oxholm's map from 1797 onwards.<sup>7</sup> Oxholm also spent these years negotiating with various merchant houses for the means to market and publish the printed map. From his correspondence books kept from this period, we know that he was in business with the Norwegian-English trading house *Wolffs and Dorville* to, among other transactions, purchase paper to reproduce the maps, as well as to distribute them in England. On 26 November 1798, he wrote to them 'I have completed a map of St Croix [and] ask you to send me 1000 sheets of paper 1 ½ *alen* long and 1 ¼ *alen* wide and a little bit more'.<sup>8</sup> Seeing as the printed map is presented on two sheets, this first order would plausibly have made up the first edition of 500 copies. A year later Oxholm wrote to the trading house announcing that he was sending a copy of his map along with one hundred prints, noting the 'beautiful paper' they had contributed to its production.<sup>9</sup>

Oxholm also marketed the map in the West Indies, as he was assisted in 1799 by the St Croix merchant and captain Hendrixon Kortright in distributing them there.<sup>10</sup> He further detailed the expenses its production entailed, 2000 *riksdaler*, and reasoned that they could not be sold for less than 5 *riksdaler* each if he was to make up for his expenditure.<sup>11</sup> In Denmark, a copy of the



**Figure 2** Peter Lotharius Oxholm, *CHARTRE over den Danske Øe ST CROIX i America /forøferdiget i Aaret 1794, og udgivet i Aaret 1799.* af P.L. Oxholm Oberst af Infanteriet [Map of the Danish Island ST CROIX in America/ made in 1794 and published in 1799]. Copper engraving by G.N. Angelo, 174 x 65 cm. © Courtesy of the British Library Board (Maps K.Top.123.73.2 TAB)

map was gifted by Oxholm, at this point himself a wealthy planter, to the Crown Prince Regent as an expression of loyalty to the colonialist venture.<sup>12</sup> The map had multiple functions and was published in numerous editions, some without a title cartouche. It both served as a visually grand testimony to Denmark-Norway's primary colonial holding, as well as the decisive practical map used by the colonial government, military and private landowners in determining property boundaries, until the late nineteenth century. The map as a material object was deeply imbricated in colonial trade: Oxholm was, during the time of the map's production, investing in the trade of coffee, timber, sugar, and notably, slaves. In 1797, he assured *Wolffs and Dorville* that he was good for advance credit he had drawn upon the company for a 'negro trade' he made with a troublesome West Indian merchant.<sup>13</sup>

### **Mapping and the reproduction of slavery**

The Danish-Norwegian West Indies, now the United States Virgin Islands, form part of the Leeward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. By the time Danish-Norwegian colonisation began, the indigenous Taíno Arawaks and Caribs had been driven out of the islands, or massacred, by the Spanish and following European settlers. Concomitantly, the islands had already been subject to waves of European and African involuntary migration.<sup>14</sup> Danish-Norwegian colonisation of the West Indies began with the acquisition of St. Thomas in 1671, followed by St. John in 1718 and finally the purchase of St. Croix from the French in 1733.<sup>15</sup> Until 1754, colonisation was led by the *Vestindisk-guineisk Kompagni* [West Indian-Guinean Company], who were granted a monopoly by the Danish-Norwegian state to maintain the sea route to and from the islands and to establish plantation production. Sugar and tobacco were grown using the labour of enslaved Africans, mainly transported from the Danish slave trading post in what was known as the Gold Coast, in today's Ghana. The Company divided the islands into plots of 2,000 by 3,000 Danish feet which were distributed through a lottery, before initiating the mapping and topographical survey of St. Croix, the island that was most suitable for cultivation.<sup>16</sup> This unusual 'micro-managerial' practice is expressed in the highly regulated and straight lines that dominate the early cadastral and planning maps.<sup>17</sup> Before Oxholm, establishing a precise survey proved difficult. The maker of the previous large-scale map of St Croix, Jens Michelsen Beck, had, amongst other dishonest practices, taken bribes from

plantation owners who sought to manipulate the drawing of boundaries to ensure property advantages.<sup>18</sup>

Oxholm thus inherited an already existing ‘rationalised’ system of plantation plots to work within and around. The map’s cartouche extends the map’s abstract delineation of land value with a visual representation of slave reproduction, as well as the process of sugar extraction and cultivation.<sup>19</sup> Unlike Beck’s map, Oxholm’s St. Croix map also includes a key table with demographic and agricultural data, in addition to the cartouche framing the title, *Charte over den Danske Øe St Croix i Amerika*. The engraved map is monochrome, although some copies have been hand-coloured.<sup>20</sup> Within the plantation delineations, there are dappled lines that complete a pattern of equally divided plots across the surface of the land (figure 3). In Oxholm’s description of the islands from 1797 *De Danske Vestindiske Öers Tilstand ....* [The West Indian Islands’ Condition], written as a defence of colonialism following anonymous criticism, he outlines the sugar production process and labour division. During planting season, the fields were divided into squares of four feet, wherein holes and ropes are arranged to create an even grid.<sup>21</sup> He goes on:

The Negroes are thereafter positioned in a line along the sticks, next to each other, each with a hatchet. Plan II. Fig. 2, and to till the earth by the holes, so that a bank a is formed between two holes b and a small bank c emerges transversely. This work is most often conducted by some of the negroes accompanied by their song, and all raise the hatchet and chop in a rhythm.<sup>22</sup>

The enslaved labourers thus created the grid-system that dominates the field, a pattern that also disciplines the map itself (figure 4).<sup>23</sup> Ordering the landscape to speculate upon its possible yield was a primary interest to Oxholm and the planters who used it. Daniel Hopkins, who has written prolifically on the history of cartography in the Danish-Norwegian colonies, argues that Oxholm’s map was an effective negotiation between the visualisation of an ideal grid and the messy, often imprecise and embodied work of physically measuring the land using triangulation.<sup>24</sup> Hopkins’ highly useful contextualisation of this map is concerned with the ways in which it functions, successfully or not, according to its own logic. However, Hopkins does not address the cartouche and its dialogue with the map and its grid, nor





Figure 3 Detail of fig 2.

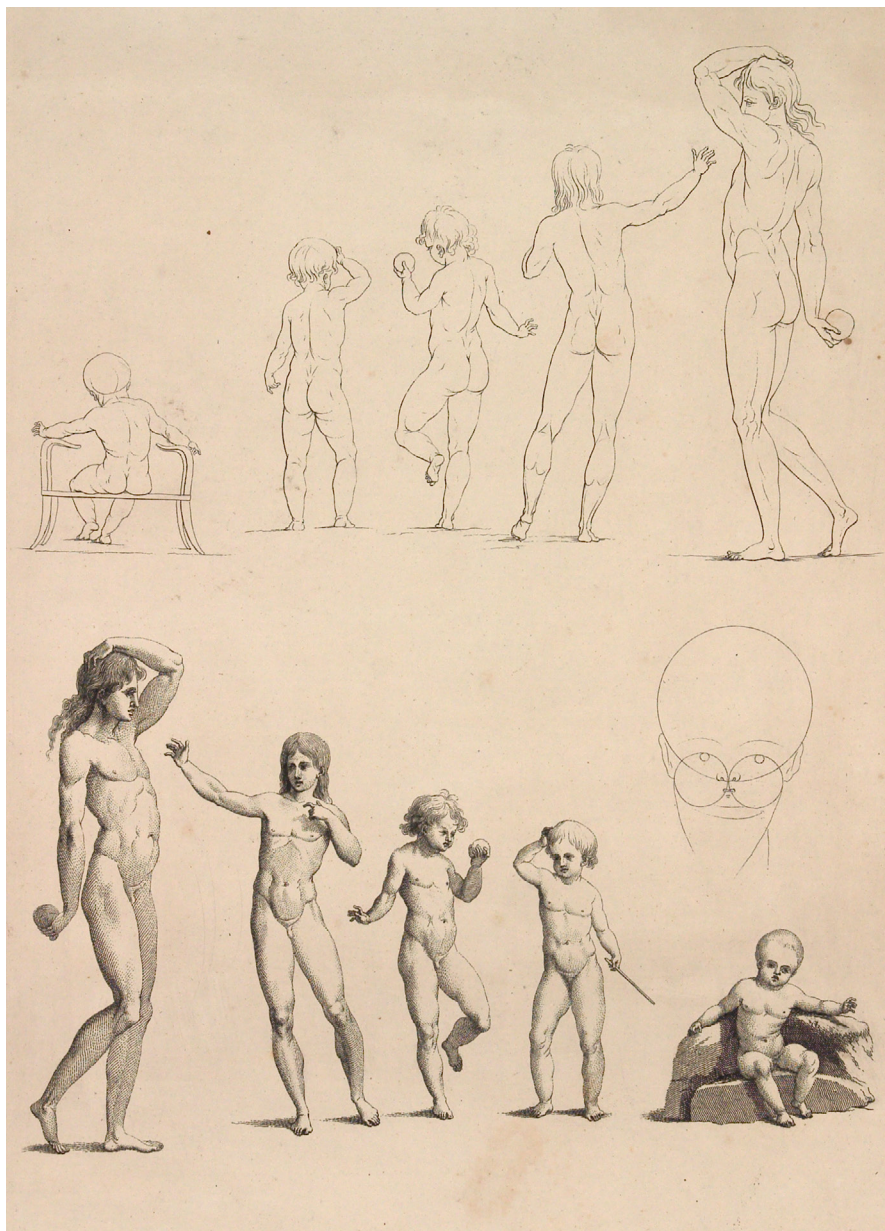
how its production and visual characteristics might complicate its ideological underpinning. The colonial ideology of visual order signifying the possibility for profit through reproduction, I argue, is threatened both by the agency that is mobilised in the representation of black figures as well as tensions contained within the medium itself.



**Figure 4** Peter Lotharius Oxholm, illustration of the growing of sugar cane alongside the paraphernalia of harvest and boiling, from *De Danske Vestindiske Öers Tilstand ... i Anledning af nogle Breve fra St. Croix indrykkede i det Politiske og Physiske Magazin for Marts og April Maaneder 1797, hvortil er föiet Beskrivelse om Sukkerets Fabrikation med 4 Planer, etc.*, Copenhagen, 1797. Copper engraving, 15,5 x 19,5 cm. British Library, London. Photo: Helene Engnes Birkeli.

The upward gaze and prayer-like pose of the enslaved woman depicted in front of the cartouche’s title, sharply contrasted against the white sheet of paper, is strikingly reminiscent of the abolitionist image of an enslaved man titled in capitals ‘Am I not a man and a brother?’ popularised through William Hackwood and Josiah Wedgwood’s 1787 black and white jasper





**Figure 5** J. F. Clemens after Luca Giordano (1632 – 1705), *Menneskets aldre* [The ages of man], undated. Copper engraving on paper, 43,3 x 32,1 cm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. Photo: SMK/Jakob Skou-Hansen.



**Figure 6** Nicolai Abildgaard, *Hovedet af en sort afrikaner, indfældet i en cirkel* [The head of a black African, framed in a circle], 1792. Pencil on paper, 144 x 123 mm. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen. Photo: Statens Museum for Kunst.

medallion.<sup>25</sup> Marking Denmark's abolition of the slave trade in 1792 (which came into effect in 1803), Nicolai Abildgaard (1743–1809) produced a coin with a similar profile head of an enslaved black figure which was undoubtedly seen by members of the colonial government (figure 6).<sup>26</sup> This testifies to

the ideological flexibility of circulating slave imagery. The placement of this figure in the context of a map made to translate the economic value of the colonial landscape resonates with Ian Baucom's contention that the commodification of black bodies was integral to the establishment of financial insurance capital.<sup>27</sup> The humanity of the woman and child is undermined by Oxholm's insistence on the enslaved body's role in the reproduction of slavery as not-yet-fully capitalised promise of profits.

In Oxholm's cartouche, the reproduction of slavery, represented as the caring for small children, is followed by an introduction to the labour regime and its violence. The young boys seemingly move from infant stage in the tent on the right, and towards adulthood in the fields. Eerily, their lives end at the point of encounter with the overseer. This cyclical motif is related to another genre of early modern images, so called 'ages of man'. The prominent Danish engraver J.F. Clemens (1748 – 1831) produced a series of such engravings.<sup>28</sup> In one of these, after Luca Giordani, two tiers of the cycle mirror each other left-to-right and right-to-left, where shading lends the lower-tier figures their volume, from a muscular seated child to a young adult seen in half-profile in contrapposto (figure 5). A draftsman's geometric make-up of a face in between the two cycles is reminiscent of a skull, perhaps performing as a memento mori in lieu of old age. It is possible that Oxholm intentionally used this pictorial formula to visualise the reproduction of slavery as central to Danish-Norwegian colonialism. In the context of slave society, however, the reproductive cycle and its omission of old age have dramatically different implications.

What is more, the cartouche suggests the continuity of slave labour by entwining the rhythm of agricultural production with the different stages of the life as if 'no rigid distinction between the procreative and the agricultural existed'.<sup>29</sup> Common to most sugar producing colonies in the Americas was a high mortality and low birth rate due to gruelling working conditions. Central to the drafts and edicts that ended the slave trade, both in the Danish-Norwegian colonies and elsewhere, was not a humanist commitment to liberty but the concern for a healthy labour force in the colonies.<sup>30</sup> Following the Slave Trade Act of 1788 to regulate the number of slaves allowed on each vessel, planters in the British West Indies were spurred to reform labour practices and import a higher proportion of enslaved women.<sup>31</sup> In the United States planters were less reliant on the slave trade for the reproduction of their

labour force, where better living conditions and different economic strategies underpinned enslavement.<sup>32</sup>

Oxholm, however, argued that the impossibility of reproduction necessitated the continued slave trade. He conjured the dangers of physical labour upon women's bodies, arguing that their open sweating pores allowed for frequent colds, while their excessive work load and bent positions hindered conception.<sup>33</sup> In a chilling letter to a Liverpool merchant house, John Shaw & Co., he directed the trader on 7 August 1797 to avoid purchasing enslaved boys and girls under the age of 12, as although young ones were 'good for [supplying] Estates with growing labourers, as many fully grown ones are wanted for immediate use'.<sup>34</sup> Contradictory to his political and personal position, he may have placed visual emphasis in his cartouche on mothering women to make the constructed reality of slavery more palatable to viewers. Nonetheless, mortality was as inevitable an outcome in his representation as it was in the lived experience of the colonies.

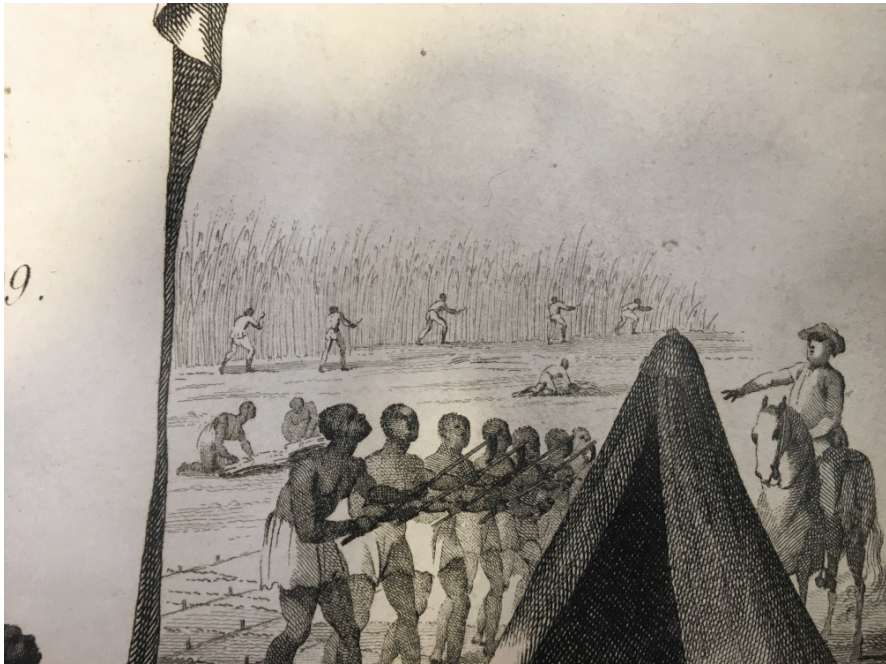
### **Temporality and the landscape**

In addition to the reproductive cycle of life, time itself was integral to the experience of plantation life. Oxholm's cartouche displays multiple time-trajectories that construct a complex history wherein agency and violence are put into play in the landscape. These temporalities induce a semi-circularity that apparently falls in line with the cycle of production. From the holing conducted by the row of men on the right-hand side, the cutting and gathering of the cane takes place in the background, and the processing of the cane broadly takes place in the mill on the left. If labour underlines the colonial extraction of value, so does the change of the crop over time.

During the industrialisation of plantation societies, the emergent system of clock time functioned to measure and parcel the natural cycles constraining agriculture.<sup>35</sup> In fact, what appears to be a circularity of movement in Oxholm's cartouche runs clockwise, suggesting an adherence to the mechanisation of time.<sup>36</sup> To the enslaved, however, their time was not a negotiable resource and was largely structured by violence.<sup>37</sup> Without access to timepieces, the enslaved collectively marked time through sound, as the blowing of conch shells or the striking of bells signalled the beginning or end of the workday.<sup>38</sup> The element of sound as a timekeeping force resonates in Oxholm's written description of the enslaved singing while planting. The



soundscape imbuing the plantation landscape, then, was another contact zone wherein a ‘rhythmic counter-culture’ operated within the colonial labour regime.<sup>39</sup> Although Oxholm’s description does not detail the specifics of the song, it was common for slave work songs to follow an antiphonal rhythm, i.e. call and response.<sup>40</sup> Caribbean work songs often followed West African traditions of ridicule which, in the context of slavery, was turned towards the masters.<sup>41</sup> Contrary to his written testimony, the men lined up in Oxholm’s cartouche do not appear to be singing, and instead arguably evoke a suppression of sound (figure 7). A determined line makes up the mouth of the man closest to the viewer. The following men’s faces are rendered in dark punctuations that blur with the cross hatchings engraved to render their skin tone. The overseer’s rectangular mouth-opening, on the other hand, suggests commanding speech. The cycle of life, as well as the rhythmic continuation of agriculture, is cut short. In a motif which attempts to stifle the enslaved men’s capacity for vocal solidarity and resistance, this tension also enables the opportunity for other forms of agency.



**Figure 7** Men raising their hatchets. Detail from figure 1.



### **Black and white**

There is something deeply ambiguous about this oppressive encounter: it remains unclear whether the enslaved men may in fact be raising their hatchets towards the overseer. In what follows, I will read the same cartouche ‘against the grain’, speaking to the ways in which the cartouche exceeds its own ideological framework. The overseer’s diagonally extended arm, with carefully rendered hand, meets the men’s raised hatchets. The tension in the men’s positions is palpable, suspending time at the point of contained force. This threat is on both occasions displaced from the hands of the white planter to the enslaved, encapsulated in the boys’ raised whips. The relative insignificance of white bodies in this cartouche makes it somewhat unusual in the picturesque landscape tradition, wherein black labour is often made subservient to the depicted grandeur of white land ownership.<sup>42</sup> In Dutch maps of the seventeenth century, sugar production appeared in the very centre of appended landscape views, often subduing the labourers to the overall machine of the sugar mill, naturalised as a part of the landscape.<sup>43</sup>

Tension is also maintained in the construction of racial difference by the print medium itself. Bodies are defined in the map’s monochrome cartouche through the contrast between black and white. The reproducible grammar of engraving sought to reduce subjects to a rational network of crosshatchings and perspective. The translation of skin tone to grid resonates with the repetition of grid systems throughout the map: the same is found in the tent and its shadow, in the laying out of grid for the planting of sugarcane and in the map itself. Michael Gaudio, studying sixteenth century Dutch encounters with the indigenous population of South America in print, has emphasised that ‘engraving the savage never was the illustration of a coherent idea; it was the confrontation with medium, a struggle – never complete – to make meaning out of matter.’<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the incision in, or removal of, metal plate made possible its rendering of volume that suggests mass.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the visibility of marks relies on an inversion of absence and presence of material in the making process, indelibly linked to the hand of the engraver incising with the burin.<sup>46</sup> Black ink’s capacity to ‘fill’ the page also had its direct uses in early modern visual discourses about the location of blackness.<sup>47</sup> Therefore, the meaning related by ink had to be carefully disciplined. In map-colouring handbooks of the eighteenth century, discernible uneasiness surrounded the possibility for ink and paint to exceed the boundaries and ‘overpopulate’

the map.<sup>48</sup> This suggests that there was a metaphorical association between the unpredictable nature of liquid media and the map's capability for social control.

Representation of racial difference through skin colour in the Americas was overdetermined by the strict codes of hierarchy based on shade, and decidedly unstable as abstracted and shifting signifiers organising a complex reality of human difference.<sup>49</sup> The black men in Oxholm's cartouche, whose musculature is accentuated, are counterposed with the overseer whose torso and face are flattened (figure 7). The overseer's hand, however, turns to black as he points towards the working men. His backwards lean evokes a fear of contamination, and the contact zone becomes a site for 'miscegenation'. The familiar is made alien, and racial hierarchy through representation threatens to fail.<sup>50</sup> The blackness of the printed marks makes these bodies visible, and it is concomitantly in the contrast between whiteness and blackness that the ideology of race is produced. Whiteness is constituted in this cartouche by unmarked paper surface. In Danish, 'blank[e]' (also meaning polish or shine) is the word that denominates whiteness as a racial marker. Paper's own materiality is absorbed in the drama of contrast and the ideological construction of whiteness, seen as simultaneously invisible, fragile and radiant.<sup>51</sup> Oxholm's reference to 'beautiful' paper augments this. Paper in the eighteenth century was an everyday ephemeral material, the quality of which was marked precisely by its whiteness and fine texture. A long and complex process of washing, fermentation, pulping, and moulding produced various degrees of paper quality.<sup>52</sup> Leaving the cellulose reams to ferment too long risked weakening the paper, suggesting the fragility of the process that enhances whiteness, as well as the material itself. As there is no visible watermark on the map, its particular quality is difficult to surmise. It has a finely 'wove' texture, however, most likely produced by a meshed sieve.<sup>53</sup> The paper's ability to absorb ink comes from a dampening process that swells the fibres and, when dry, leaves them more voluminous, dense and pliable. The relationship between binding agent and pigment determines the viscosity of the ink, and furthermore its interaction with the paper.<sup>54</sup> A viscous ink will bleed less, however, too much varnish will leave the ink dry and powdery. The crisp outline of Oxholm's print marks suggests that the ink has bonded well with the paper. Viscosity, or resistance, thus keeps the black figures intact from 'bleeding' into the paper weave, both processes conjuring

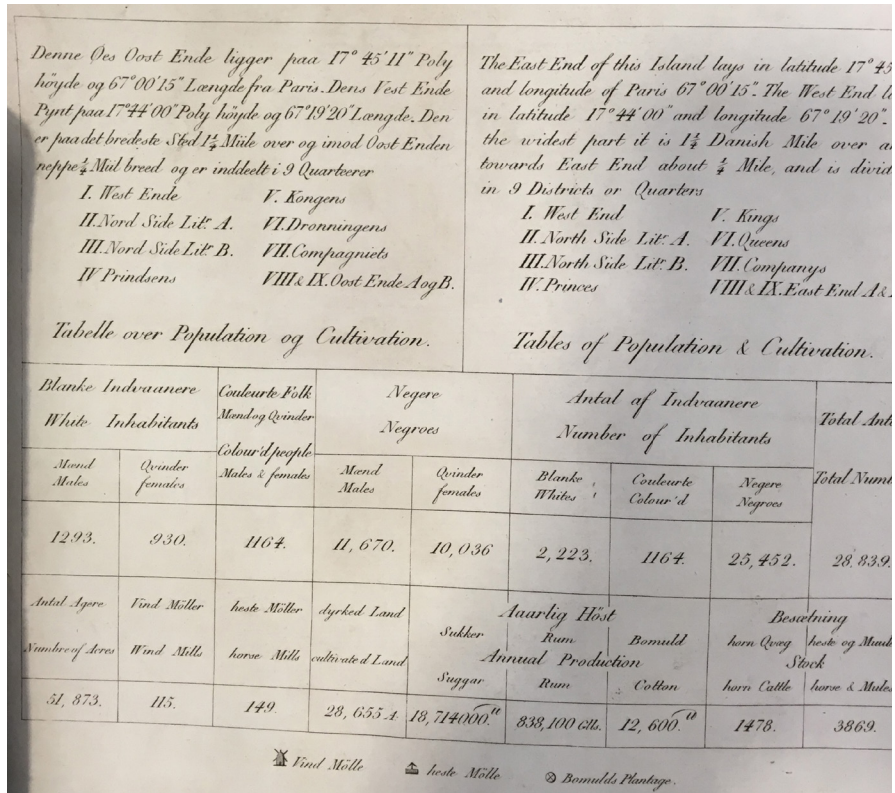


Figure 8 Demographic table. Detail of figure 1.

images of violence. The chemical interaction and successful assemblage of two materials is decidedly uneasy, or a strained hybridisation. To reiterate Gaudio's remark, this is not to equate the physical violence of plantation society to the scriptive violence of image-making.<sup>55</sup> But rather to emphasise that the ideological and discursive power made possible by ink depended on material relations also richly meaningful.

The insistence on the opposition between black and white furthermore belied the possibility for racial mixing which produced 'colour'. Juxtaposed with the cartouche, in the upper left-hand corner, Oxholm has provided the viewer with a table detailing demographics side by side with the colony's agricultural apparatus (figure 8). Organising persons from 'blanke/white' to 'coloured/kulørte' and finally 'negroes', the carefully executed cursive

numbers below communicate a critical aspect of colonial reality: the enslaved population by far outweighed the white population. As an inventory of the island that translated the social realities of racial mixing, it constructs another map that both complicates and reinforces the cartographic landscape. In 1747, governor Jens Hansen segregated the Free Afro-Caribbeans to what became known as the 'Free Gutters' of Christiansted, and sugar fields were reportedly fenced with cacti to keep the enslaved from escaping.<sup>56</sup> Fear of racial mixing in the Danish West Indies was expressed in careful regulation of tactile intimacy between the domestic enslaved and white owners, and was more generally facilitated by architectural planning designed to keep sections of society apart.<sup>57</sup>

The process of 'taking away' entailed by copper engraving was a mobilisation of absence to construct colonial space; space between bodies, both represented and real, and space for the extraction of value. The grid simultaneously keeps apart and composes coherent mass. Black ink structures both white and black bodies, providing precisely the 'contact zone' making visual 'miscegenation' possible. The map itself is a conglomeration of elements affixed on paper, engendering different forms of narrative and requiring different modes of reading. Jill Casid argues that imperial landscaping depended on the seamless grafting of plant species, as alien and indigenous elements assimilated.<sup>58</sup> She also relates the possibility of 'counter landscapes' of hybridisation, in which the means of imperial landscaping are utilised by the colonised to make radical alternatives.<sup>59</sup> The topography depicted in Oxholm's map suggests organic forms that resist the ordering grid of the estates, and the tense moving bodies of the figures in the cartouche are precisely what threatens to collapse discipline and racial control.

### **The overturning of slavery and history**

A wider implication of the potential overturning of slave society is the contestation of history itself. Historical survival was of clear concern to colonial writers and mapmakers, as the ordering and improvement of the colonial landscape was a determinant of its brittle future. Pessimism about the reproduction of slavery was inextricably tied with its financial security and reliance on global markets.<sup>60</sup> Furthermore, fear of the enslaved and black population's 'more skilled' relationship with the landscape was by no means irrelevant.<sup>61</sup> In this vein, West relates: '... I have on many botanical

excursions with travail had to cling to shrubberies and roots over those places where Negroes run with the same knowledge as on the flat plain'.<sup>62</sup> The enslaved in the Danish-Norwegian West Indies continually resisted the Euro-Caribbean planter- and colonialist class.<sup>63</sup> In 1759, a slave rebellion was caught underway by the town bailiff in Christiansted, wherein the rebels had sought to kill the planters and administrators and establish their own realm of governance.<sup>64</sup> Oxholm's map betrays a decisive anxiety surrounding the unpredictability ensued by processes of destruction and transformation. Oxholm, in his 1797 account, describes the multi-sensory experience of being on a plantation during harvest: the shouting of the men boiling the sugar juice; the balmy warm air filled with the dust of disintegrating sugar fibres; the volatility of fire as it heats the cauldrons separating juice from hard sugar.<sup>65</sup> Enslaved men cut the land and vegetation, and enslaved men and women engendered the transformation of plant matter from propagation to edible consumer goods.

Similarly, the map came into being through a series of cuts, which generated contact zones between bodies and spaces. These cuts facilitated their (re)productive role: maps enabled profitable colonial expansion, at the expense of the black body. This chapter has been concerned with reading colonial maps and images against the grain. It has been argued that the practical and authoritative purpose of these maps and images, validating enslavement and exploitation of land, also contains aspects of colonial society in which European hegemony is threatened. The perceived fragility of white authority against black resistance was invoked both by figurative agency and by the materiality of the print itself. Here, the cuts make alternative histories possible.

### Abbreviations

RA KH: Rigsarkivet København [Danish National Archives]

VIFR: Vestindiske Forestillings- og Resolutionsprotokoller

APLO: Arkivet efter Peter Lotharius Oxholm

KB: Kongelige Bibliotek [Danish Royal Library]

### Notes

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- 1 Daniel Hopkins, 'Peter Lotharius Oxholm and Late Eighteenth-Century Danish West Indian Cartography', in *The Danish presence and legacy in the Virgin Islands*, 1993, pp. 29-56.
- 2 Emphasis added. Ibid. Hopkins' translation; RA KH, VIFR, 1777-1778, 392-394, 31 October 1778.
- 3 Ibid. I have been unsuccessful in finding the archival source that Hopkins refers to here.
- 4 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, London, 2007, pp. 7-8.
- 5 Original quote: '... et meget nøiagtigt og efter en stor Scala udlagt Situation-Chart af Statshauptmand Oxholm, næsten fuldført för min afreise': Hans West, *Bidrag til Beskrivelse Over Ste Croix med en Kort Udsigt over St. Thomas, St. Jean, Tortola, Spanishtown og Crabeneiland*, Copenhagen, 1793, p. 235
- 6 Daniel Hopkins, 'Peter Lotharius Oxholm and Late Eighteenth-Century Danish West Indian Cartography', op. cit., p. 52.
- 7 Merete Bodelsen and Povl Engelstoft (eds.), *Weilbachs Kunstnerleksikon*, Copenhagen, 1947, 'Angelo, Theodor Gottfried Nicolai'
- 8 'Jeg har forfærdiget et kort af St Croix beder at sende mig 1000 ark Papir 1½ Al langt 1¼ Al bredt og lidt mere': Oxholm to *Wolffs and Dorville*, correspondence books, RA KH APLO, 06087 1D. One *alen* is equivalent to c. 62 cm.
- 9 Oxholm to *Wolffs and Dorville*, 18 September 1799, correspondence books, RA KH APLO, 06087 1D.
- 10 Oxholm to Captain Kortright, 18 September 1799. RA KH, APLO, 6087, 1D. For biographical description, see 'Cornelius Hendrickson or Henderixon Kortright of Hylands, Essex', in *Legacies of British Slave Ownership Database*, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/2146644195> (accessed 14 July 2019)
- 11 It seems that the production costs of the map far outweighed his income from its publication. Furthermore, Oxholm owed *Wolffs and Dorville* over £2000 in 1800, which in the subsequent decades developed into a legal conflict embroiled in the post-Napoleonic settlement between England and Denmark. See Ada Polak, *Wolffs & Dorville: Et norsk-engelsk handelshus i London under Napoleonskrigene*, Halden, 1968, p. 223.

- 12 Daniel Hopkins, 'Peter Lotharius Oxholm and Late Eighteenth-Century Danish West Indian Cartography', op. cit., 52-54
- 13 Oxholm in Copenhagen to Wolffs and Dorville on 7 August 1797, correspondence books, RA KH APLO, 06087 1D.
- 14 Lomarsh Roonarine, 'United States Virgin Islands Migration', in *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 57, issues 3 and 4, 2008, pp. 136-139.
- 15 Neville T. Hall, *Slave Society in the Danish West Indies: St. Thomas, St. John and St. Croix*, Mona, Jamaica, et.al., 1992, p. 1
- 16 Louise Sebros and Erik Gøbel, 'Forandringens år 1720-40', in Poul Erik Olsen (ed.), *Vestindien: St. Croix, St. Thomas og St. Jan*, Copenhagen, 2017, pp. 109-110.
- 17 See for example I.M. Beck's map of St Croix (1754), *Library of Congress*, <https://lccn.loc.gov/74696186> (accessed 14 July 2019); Daniel Hopkins, 'The eighteenth-century invention of a measure in the Caribbean: the Danish acre of St. Croix', in the *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 18, issue 2, 1992, pp. 163-165.
- 18 Daniel Hopkins, 'Jens Michelsen Beck's Map of a Danish West Indian Sugar-Plantation Island: Eighteenth-Century Colonial Cartography, Land Administration, Speculation, and Fraud', in *Terra Incognita*, vol 25, issue 1, 1993, pp. 104-106.
- 19 Niklas Thode Jensen, *For the Health of the Enslaved: Slaves, Medicine and Power in the Danish West Indies, 1803-1848*, Copenhagen, 2012, p. 39.
- 20 There is at least one hand coloured copy, in the British Library, which is illustrated here. The issue of colour in relation to the opposition between black and white is addressed in other parts of my PhD project, which this essay forms a part of.
- 21 Peter Lotharius Oxholm, *De Danske Vestindiske Öers Tilstand ... i Anledning af nogle Breve fra St. Croix indrykkede i det Politiske og Physiske Magazin for Marts og April Maaneder 1797, hvortil er føiet Beskrivelse om Sukkerets Fabrikation med 4 Planer, etc.*, Copenhagen, 1797, p. 42.
- 22 Ibid. The key references an accompanying illustration, similar to the cartouche figures. 'Negerne stilles derefter i en Linie langs med Pinderne, ved Siden af hinanden, hver med en Hakke, Plan II. Fig. 2, og opphugge Jorden af Hullerne, saaledes, at en Banke a formeeres imellem to Huller b og en liden Banke c bliver paa tværs staaende. Dette Arbeide skeer som oftest under sang af nogle af Negerne, og alle løfte Hakken op og hugge ind efter Takt.'
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 44
- 24 Daniel Hopkins, 'Peter Lotharius Oxholm and Late Eighteenth-Century Danish West Indian Cartography', op. cit., pp. 47-48.
- 25 'Medallion: Hackwood, William', *Victoria and Albert Collection*, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O79580/medallion-hackwood-william/> (accessed 18 May 2019); On the Danish-Norwegian abolition of the slave trade, see: Erik Gøbel, 'The Danish Edict of 16th March 1792 to Abolish the Slave Trade,' in Arnold R. Highfield and George F. Tyson (eds.) *Negotiating Enslavement: Perspectives on Slavery in the Danish West Indies, St. Croix*, 2009, pp. 130-131; Sven E. Green-Pedersen, 'NEGRO SLAVERY AND CHRISTIANITY: On Erik Pontoppidan's preface to L.F. Roemer Tilforladelig Efterretning om Kysten Guinea (A true account of the coast of Guinea), 1760', *Transactions of the Historical Society of Ghana*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1974, pp. 85-86.

- 26 Thomas Lederballe, 'Nicolai Abildgaard (1743–1809), Simo betror sin frigivne Sosia sine bekymringer over sin søns forhold til pigen fra Andros, 1803 [Simo entrusts his freed Sosia with his worries...]' *Statens Museum for Kunst* (2005), <http://collection.smk.dk/#/detail/KMS587> (accessed 14 July 2019).
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- 28 These are undated. See Clemens, 'Menneskets aldre', *Statens Museum for Kunst*, <http://collection.smk.dk/#/detail/KKS10812> (accessed 12 July 2019)
- 29 Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery*, Philadelphia, 2004, p. 75. See also Elsa Dorlin, *La matrice de la race: Généalogie sexuelle et coloniale de la Nation française*, Paris, 2009.
- 30 Hans West, *Bidrag til Beskrivelse Over Ste Croix med en Kort Udsigt over St. Thomas, St. Jean, Tortola, Spanishtown og Crabeneiland*, Copenhagen, 1793, pp. 106–107; Pernille Røge, 'Why the Danes Got There First: A Trans-Imperial Study of the Abolition of the Danish Slave Trade in 1792', in *Slavery & Abolition*, vol. 35, no. 4, p. 585; Neville T. Hall, 'Maritime Maroons: "Grand Marronage" from the Danish West Indies', in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 4, 1985, p. 479; Niklas Thode Jensen, *For the Health of the Enslaved*, op. cit., 43
- 31 Sasha Turner, 'Home-grown Slaves: Women, Reproduction, and the Abolition of the Slave Trade, Jamaica, 1788–1807', in *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2011, pp. 39–42; Cassidy Picken, 'Annihilated Property: Slavery and Reproduction after Abolition', in *European Romantic Review*, vol. 28, no. 5, 2017, pp. 607–608.
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